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# SILO
# a/k/a DENIZENS OF FILTH

**Written by S. Craig Zahler**

# S I L O

aka

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By

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EXT. OPEN PLAINS, MONTANA - NIGHT

A narrow highway cuts a line of civilization across the sparse plains of western Montana. There is no moon.

A white car slides like a dropped bar of soap down the road; the vehicle's bluish-white lights combat the night-blanketed landscape, the consequent sharp shadows articulating a relief of rocky terrain.

A red dot briefly glows behind the driver's window.

INT. WHITE CAR - SAME

CYNTHIA, a plump thirty two year-old redhead with bright eyes and an amused grin, drives the car, listening to talk radio. She holds a smoking cigarette in her left hand. Her window is cracked open.

ANNOUNCER
And we must always remember to follow His example, and that the righteous path is rarely the easiest.

Cynthia nods in affirmation of the announcer's words.

ANNOUNCER
(continuing)
Evils beset us in myriad ways from myriad sources, yet acceptance and tolerance, particularly with those who would wrong us or disparage us- is what enables us to transcend in His image, as He would wish.

Cynthia takes a drag from her cigarette.

EXT. LAST STOP DINER - LATER

The diner is a low gray building set far back in a wide parking lot. Eighteen-wheelers are parked in the pullover and several cars within the lot itself. The diner sign is illuminated: GRUB, GAS & SOUVENIRS.

Cynthia's white car glides up the highway, towards the diner. The vehicle slows and turns towards the lot. The headlights play across the terrain: brush, stones and weeds leap to bright life from their dark slumber. The car headlights shine upon an OLD MAN, crawling by the side of the road. The car stops abruptly.

INT. WHITE CAR - SAME

Cynthia watches the Old Man crawl across the sandy curb, towards the parking lot. His clothing is tattered and his movement is painfully slow; his face is turned down.

He has a tool belt from which hang two large rusty wrenches, a set of pliers and several screwdrivers. Sand and dust motes swirl in the air around him.

Cynthia slowly drives toward him. Her brightening headlights reveal his poor condition: his skin is desiccated and crisscrossed with lesions.

EXT. LAST STOP DINER - SAME

The car glides towards the old man and stops, one yard of distance between him and the front bumper.

Inside the vehicle, Cynthia shifts the gear into park. Leaving the engine running and the lights on, she opens the front door and steps outside.

The Old Man stops crawling, his head dangling between his shoulders like a dried-out punching bag.

CYNTHIA
Sir?

The Old Man remains still.

CYNTHIA
(continuing; louder)
Sir? Excuse me, are you all right?

He does not respond.

Cynthia tentatively walks closer. Her eyes flicker across the Old Man: his clothing looks like it was once a full-body jumpsuit, of a light blue color. His forehead nearly touches the ground, his face obfuscated by tangled, greasy strands of white hair.

Cynthia kneels beside the Old Man.

CYNTHIA
(continuing; gently)
How can I help you?

The Old Man begins to shake.

Cynthia reaches towards him, despite her apprehension. Her chubby index and middle fingers brush upon the Old Man's shoulder.

The Old Man grabs her wrist with a horribly misshapen hand: his fingers are unnaturally white and swollen and are covered with boils; long yellow fingernails jut painfully into Cynthia's skin.

Cynthia SCREAMS.

The Old Man lifts his head. Two cloudy eyes stare from his grotesque face; his lips are withered, revealing his brown teeth and gray gums. He opens his mouth; he has no tongue.

He tries to talk to Cynthia, but manages only a horrible wet MOANING noise.

CYNTHIA
(continuing)
Let go, let go!

Horrified, Cynthia attempts to pull away from him; the Old Man maintains his grip upon her wrist. She attempts to pry his fingers from her arm, but he holds fast. A pale boil on his index finger bursts, spattering translucent fluid upon her arm.

Cynthia gags, but chokes down the rising impulse. The Old Man GROANS in pain. Small gray bugs, the size of ticks crawl out of the burst boil.

Cynthia hits his clasping hand with her free one; something within the sagging skin of his wrist CRACKLES. He MOANS again, though this time more anger colors his bestial response. She wrests her arm loose and stumbles back.

She lunges toward her car. The Old Man crawls after her, towards the glaring headlights.

Cynthia opens the door and climbs into the car. She SLAMS the door shut, locking it behind her. She checks to make sure that all of the doors are locked-- they are.

The Old Man disappears beneath the headlights...and then beneath the car.

Cynthia looks out of the side window, to the ground, but sees nothing. She looks in her rear view mirror, but sees only the sere terrain illumined by her red brake lights.

CLUNK! Cynthia YELPS. BANG.

CYNTHIA
(continuing)
Please Jesus-- I don't know what to do.

CLUNK. CLANG.

On the verge of hysterics, she shifts the car into drive. CLACLAANG. RATTLE. RATTLE. RATTLE. The car does not move.

Cynthia begins to WEEP; she breathes as if she is about to hyperventilate-- quick and uneven respirations. She flips back the flap on her large white purse; she turns on the overhead light and looks through the bag. She withdraws a cellular phone.

CLUNK. Cynthia SHRIEKS.

The Old Man is kneeling in front of the car, leaning forward onto the hood. The fiery headlights beneath him cause his skeletal grin, cloudy eyes and abraded skin to glow like a scarified moon.

Through the passenger window, Cynthia looks at the diner...which lies more than fifty yards away. She starts HONKING the car horn.

The Old Man WAILS.

She HONKS the horn again.

The Old Man WAILS and then pushes the car. The car rolls backward, toward the highway. Cynthia jams on the brakes, but they have been disabled and have no effect.

The white car glides onto the paved road.

Bright headlights of an oncoming truck glare in through the passenger window, momentarily blinding Cynthia.

BOOM. A huge eighteen wheeler SLAMS into the car.

EXT. LAST STOP DINER - SAME

The white vehicle CRUMPLES upon the front of the truck like an aluminum can; the windows burst, refracting light like tinsel and glitter. Cynthia SCREAMS as she is crushed and killed.

FADE OUT:

EXT. NEW MEXICO, MISSILE SILO SITE - MORNING

An army green jeep is parked in the mountainous terrain of western New Mexico.

A handsome woman wearing a navy military suit climbs out of the jeep: she is brunette and in her early forties. She walks over to the septagonal hatch in the ground; she lights a cigarette and looks back at the jeep. Her name is KIRSTEN.

A second person climbs out of the jeep. He is a shark-faced fellow in his early thirties; he wears his bright blond hair short and posses some impressively large and bright teeth. He walks beside Kirsten. His name is BODELL.

Kirsten extricates a cigarette from the package with an effortless shake and offers it to him.

BODELL
Trying to cut down- it's a filthy habit.

Kirsten tucks the pack away in her breast pocket and inhales through the lit cigarette in her mouth.

BODELL
(continuing)
Disgusting habit.

Bodell points to the septagonal hatch.

BODELL
(continuing)
I fucked Janice down there. Mina too.

KIRSTEN
Mina? She's a civilian. How'd you get her past security?

BODELL
I let them watch us on surveillance.

KIRSTEN
How romantic.

A third person emerges from the jeep and joins the other two at the edge of the silo. He is fifty-five and as serious as cancer. His name is TYLER. He says nothing.

KIRSTEN
(continuing; to Bodell)
You ever think about anything besides chasing women?

BODELL
Nuclear warfare springs to mind on occasion. And baseball during playoffs.

Tyler, looking up from the door, raises a walkie-talkie to his his mouth.

TYLER
This is Launch Control Chief Tyler Warren. Drive in the RVGC.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
(through the walkie)
She's on her way.

Tyler, his arm decorated with his Chief ranking, looks towards the eastern horizon. He sees a thin cloud of dust rise against the pinkish-gold sky of early morning New Mexico. He turns away from the rising sun and looks upon the twenty foot wide septagonal hatch.

Bodell and Kirsten look at Tyler; the Chief's face is still, inscrutable.

BODELL
Are you going to miss your little Peacekeeper, Chief?

Tyler shakes his head.

TYLER
The world is better off if we don't need these things anymore.

BODELL
(to Kirsten)
What a brave old dinosaur he is.

Tyler, apparently used to Bodell's inappropriate remarks, ignores the sally. He looks back to the horizon.

From the low dust cloud emerge seven military jeeps and two vans, followed by the large RVGC. The Reentry Vehicle Guidance and Control is a forty foot long van painted military green.

KIRSTEN
(to Bodell)
Keep an eye on the length of your exposure. This Peacekeeper nosecone has ten warheads and yields more than twice as many millireps as a Titan II.

BODELL
Thanks for your concern doctor... but radiation happens to be my birth control of choice.

EXT. NEW MEXICO, SILO GROUNDS - MOMENTS LATER

The enormous RVGC drives directly over the septagonal silo hatch. Bodell climbs inside of the vehicle, through a rear end downflap, his boot CLUNKING on the polished steel.

From the front of the RVGC, a mustached driver looks over at Tyler.

TYLER
Lower her skirt.

The driver nods. From the bottom of the van, an environmental skirt is lowered to encapsulate the perimeter of the silo opening; the descent of the skirt is accompanied by a CLUNKING sound and a series of HISSES.

TYLER

(continuing)
Open the hatch.

INT. RVCG VAN - SAME

Bodell, his smile gone, walks into the central containment area of the enormous, steel and iron van. A steel winch manned by two young SOLDIERS lies directly beside the trapdoor in the center of the enclosure.

SOLDIER #1
The silo door is open. On your command, Sir.

BODELL
Did you remove the ballistic actuators?

The Soldier, a blond young man with a crooked nose, looks a little worried.

SOLDIER #1
No one told us to, Captain Sir.

BODELL
It would be...unfortunate...if they detonated while we were handling the warheads. I'll check them out before we fish out the nosecone. Open the hatch.

SOLDIER #1
Yes Sir.

Soldier #1 turns the ratchet lock while the other pulls the release lever; the van's trapdoor slides out of the way, into its housing. Directly beneath is the black abyss of the silo.

BODELL
Lights.

CLICK. Four lights attached to the underside of the RVGC sparkle and HUM, throwing bluish-white light into the silo. Directly below the van lies the warhead, sitting atop the guidance and control unit and the booster base of the missile.

Bodell leans through the hole for a moment. He leans back up.

BODELL
(continuing)
Looks like Chief Tyler has already stripped the place bare-- the actuators are gone. Lower the cable and let's haul her up.

SOLDIER #1 & 2
Yes Sir.

EXT. NEW MEXICO, SILO GROUNDS - MOMENTS LATER

Tyler and Kirsten watch the RVGC, silhouetted by the rising sun.

KIRSTEN
Do you have any plans once the deactivation is complete, Sir?

TYLER
Gertrude wants me to retire, but I'm not quite ready. With the kids grown and gone, I don't know what I'd do all day.

Tyler smirks at the thought, the smile sits strangely amidst the hard lines of his face.

TYLER
(continuing)
It'll be difficult to adjust from this level of responsibility to eating cottage cheese, doing crossword puzzles and watching television.

KIRSTEN
Bodell and I have been taking on special assignments for MMT- inspecting and deactivating decommissioned silos.

TYLER
I've been apprised of your activities.

KIRSTEN
Have you considered coming with us? Nobody knows the launch controls designs better than you.

TYLER
I'm considering it.

Tyler raises his walkie-talkie and presses the speak bar. CRACKLE.

TYLER
(continuing)
What's the status, Corporal?

BODELL (O.S.)
The nosecone is in the van.

TYLER
Did you detect any damage or

deterioration?

BODELL (O.S.)
Cosmetic only. We'll secure the heads and then go after the guidance and control system.

TYLER
Good.

Tyler puts the walkie-talkie back on his belt and looks over at Kirsten. He releases a long, slow breath.

TYLER
(continuing)
Well it's official: my career as a launch control Chief has come to an end.

FADE TO BLACK:

OVER BLACK

YOUNG MAN'S VOICE
It's me and Sheldon and Dwight and Chops. We are in this building in the middle of Iraq. The place was bombed twice and looks like an abandoned construction site. Chops is eating the ham salad sandwich that's been sitting in his pocket since Thursday- even though we tell him not to- and Sheldon and Dwight are arguing about whether it's worse to screw- sorry- whether it's worse to have sex with a transsexual and find out what she used to be during the act or after you're done. I guess they talk about that kind of stuff 'cause they're nervous, you know? But Chops and me are quiet, thinking about things back home- he's from Nebraska too- and hoping we don't get shot by some crazy ass sand nigger. Sheldon and Dwight take the front, their night goggles are down and their sixteens are unlocked. Me and Chops get the rear. We walk deeper into this place. I can't remember if it was a hotel or a hospital, but there was a ton of stuff piled everywhere, beds, tvs and some burnt bodies. Then we get to a branching passage-- totally blown to shit- sorry-

blown up. Sheldon goes left and Dwight goes right. They tell me and Chops to go straight.

(beat)

'You think anybody is in here?' Chops asks me when we're alone, but all I can think of is why the hell did he eat that sandwich, his breath is gonna give us away to the Arabs-- they don't like ham no more than the Jews do. 'No,' I say, 'I think everyone here is dead-- they bombed it twice.' But then we find that door, the one that I told you about before.

(beat)

Everything in the whole goddam place- sorry- everything in the whole place is burnt or crushed, but this door looks like it was put in yesterday, freshly varnished. It's just like new.

(beat)

Me and Chops point our sixteens at it and stare, wondering what to do.

OLDER MALE VOICE

How did the door make you feel?

YOUNG MAN'S VOICE

Afraid. Like not everything in there was dead...like we could never drop enough bombs on Iraq. Then we hear a dog barking on the other side of the door, real angry and mean...like the one the Halloways had next door when I was growing up. So we walk up to the door and smash it open with the butts of our guns and when the door opens the dog shuts up...or is shut up. We go in and it's like a meat factory inside, only instead of sides of beef, they got naked people hanging on hooks, swaying back and forth like dry tree leaves in the fall or something. It's the worst smell I smelled in my entire life-- it smelled so bad you could almost see the smell, you know?

(beat)

Chops pukes his ham salad sandwich and I gag, but I don't puke. 'They're Americans,' Chops says and then starts to scream like

he's going crazy. I look at him and there's this burnt-up Arab biting into his right leg, tearing it open like a turkey drumstick. And then I wake up.

CUT TO:

INT. ROBERT LINDERMEN'S OFFICE - SAME

ROBERT LINDERMAN is thirty-seven; he is slender and sandy-haired and wears a white shirt with a slim blue tie and blue slacks. He sits in a beige reclining chair opposite PHILLIP, a young man of nineteen years who wears a starched blue shirt and navy slacks. The room they are in is carpeted in rust-colored shag and the sofa Phillip sits on is beige.

Behind Robert is a large window admitting a view of a fountain which sprays water in a dozen intersecting, focused jets. A pebble garden surrounds the fountain and stone benches surround that. Phillip, staring at the fountains, rubs his knees and then looks at Robert.

Robert drinks from a glass of water set upon the small wooden table to his right.

PHILLIP
So what's it mean?

ROBERT
It could mean many things. It seems to indicate that you feel responsible for Chops' death- either as a result of your own fears- as personified by the scary dog from your childhood- or by allowing him to undertake a dangerous assignment- as illustrated by him eating the sandwich.

PHILLIP
So which is it?

ROBERT
Dream analysis is a specious, unreliable quasi-science best left to carnival fortune tellers. More important by far is how the dreams affect you and why you have them. How often have you had this dream?

PHILLIP
Most nights since he died. A dream like that or something similar. Sometimes a dog with no skin on its head starts biting at

his neck.

ROBERT
Do you feel responsible for Chops' death?

Phillip rubs his palms up and down his thighs as he contemplates Robert's question. Robert's eyes flicker to the young man's hands and gritted teeth.

PHILLIP
Sort of, I guess.

ROBERT
Your CO felt that your behavior was exemplary and that your recon with Chops saved the lives of the ninety-second squadron. You were shot yourself, then decorated and honorably discharged.

Phillip nods. Tears sparkle in his eyes.

PHILLIP
But he's dead. It doesn't matter what they pin on me or say about me-- Chops was my best friend- we joined the army together- and now he's gone. Sometimes I wish...sometimes at night when I wake up from the dream, I wish...

Phillip wipes tears from his eyes.

ROBERT
You wish you had been killed instead?

Phillip nods, but says nothing.

ROBERT
(continuing)
Phillip...when Chops signed up for the army, he put his own life in jeopardy. He, like most men who enlist, risked himself for something he believed in. You cannot be held accountable for what happened to him. But you do, regardless.

Robert picks up a pen from the table beside him and writes on the small pad in his lap.

ROBERT
(continuing)
Since the incident, how many hours

have you slept each night?

PHILLIP
Three or four- sometimes less- and all broken up.

Robert nods. Phillip watches the ballpoint tip of Robert's pen scratch upon the yellow paper.

ROBERT
The best way for you to move on from this incident is to recognize that you are not at fault. To do so it is imperative that you have uninterrupted, replenishing sleep every night. With that, you can begin to heal mentally...as well as physically. I'm prescribing a sedative as well as an anti-anxiety medication.

Robert tears the sheet from the little yellow pad and extends it toward his patient.

Phillip looks at the proffered slip with trepidation.

PHILLIP
I was hoping that I wasn't gonna need any medication.

ROBERT
I do not believe in medication unless it absolutely necessary, but it is in your case. You are locked in a post-traumatic depression by your anxieties and the situation is not getting better. What you've been through is far beyond the scope of what is normal...and consequently you need aid outside of what your body can provide on its own. If you have a cough, you take cough medicine--this is no different, though far more important.

Phillip, less uncomfortable at the thought of taking the prescription, takes the slip.

ROBERT
(continuing)
Follow the dosages indicated and come to see me next week.

Phillip nods.

EXT. PARK WITHIN BUILDING COMPLEX - TWILIGHT

Robert, now wearing a tan sports jacket over his white shirt, sits upon a stone bench reading a book, ten yards from the fountain; the sun illumines the jets of water as if they are molten gold. The book he reads is a western entitled 'The Twilight Riders.' Other people sit in the park- a COUPLE playing chess, a WOMAN on a laptop computer, and a TEENAGER reading a magazine- yet the tranquil splashing of the fountain is the dominant sound.

A shadow falls across Robert's book. He looks up to see LAURA, a cosmopolitan woman in her mid-thirties, with black hair pulled tightly behind her head. He smiles and stands up.

ROBERT
Hi.

Robert kisses Laura on the cheek.

LAURA
Are you going to wear that?

Robert looks down at his jacket; he checks the elbows- which are a little worn- and smooths over his pockets. He then straightens his tie.

ROBERT
I should have worn...?

LAURA
Something nice? That olive-colored suit I bought you for your birthday or that jacket I gave you for our anniversary. And what about those Italian shoes I gave you last Christmas?

ROBERT
Is there some deeply hidden agenda behind all of your gifts?

LAURA
Yes doctor, there is: don't be a slob.

ROBERT
Well, at least you're not passive aggressive.

INT. THE SILVER PLATE - EARLY EVENING

The restaurant is an edgy establishment with long wooden benches, severe specular lighting and glass tables filled with water and swimming fish. It is packed with people dressed far better than Robert...who currently sits with his wife in a darkened corner.

LAURA
It is not a coincidence that they sat us here.

She derisively eyes Robert's attire, shakes her head and then returns her gaze to the menu.

LAURA
(continuing)
It's so dark over here I can barely even read this.

They each stare at the menu in their hands, squinting.

ROBERT
Does that actually say beefcheeks?

LAURA
(irked)
Yes.

ROBERT
Which set of cheeks are culled for this gastronomic delight?

Laura does not respond.

Robert withdraws a slender flashlight- of the variety he inspects eyes with- from his jacket pocket, CLICKS it on and shines it upon the menu.

LAURA
Put that away.

Robert CLICKS it off and puts it back inside his jacket pocket.

Laura examines the menu closely. Robert nods to himself.

ROBERT
I'm going to have the steak.

LAURA
How daring.

ROBERT
I don't feel like being challenged by my food this evening. I had a hard enough day already.

LAURA
Another boy upset because he couldn't meet daddy's expectations?

For the first time, Robert looks genuinely annoyed with his wife.

ROBERT
These boys see some terrible things over there. You could have a little sympathy.

LAURA
I think I'll have the beefcheeks with balsamic and squid ink reduction instead.

INT. ROBERT AND LAURA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is very clean and wallpapered in a rose and carmine flower pattern. Laura is asleep. Robert reads his book.

INT. ROBERT LINDERMEN'S OFFICE - MORNING

Robert, carrying a cup of coffee and a briefcase, walks into his office. Two MEN sit inside, awaiting him. Both are in their sixties and have sun-weathered faces: they are MAJOR DILLET and HARRY. They both look at Robert.

MAJOR DILLET
Doctor Robert Linderman?

ROBERT
Yes. And you are...?

MAJOR DILLET
Major George Dillet, US Army.

HARRY
Harry Deerworth, Executive of Civil Engineering.

Robert rests his briefcase on his chair and then sets his coffee upon a coaster on the adjacent table.

ROBERT
You guys here for couple's therapy?

The Men stare at Robert, blankly.

ROBERT
(continuing)
Bad joke. What brings you here this afternoon?

Major Dillet motions for Robert to sit. Robert complies.

MAJOR DILLET
A vagrant was detained for aggravated manslaughter in northern Montana. He killed a civilian by pushing her in front of a truck.

Harry withdraws two photos from his steel briefcase and shows them to Robert. They depict the metal pretzel that was once a white car; an arm and a blood-covered face are discernible within the wreckage. Harry reclaims the photos and files them away.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
The vagrant was confined to a solitary holding pen because of his condition...which was at first believed to be leprosy of some kind. It is not leprosy.

Robert stares at Major Dillet, curious but silent.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
Parasitic bugs of a type we've not seen before had burrowed into his skin and somehow inflamed his sebaceous ducts, which they summarily inhabited. These tick-like insects apparently lived in his skin for many years, though we were able to rout them out and exterminate them.

Harry withdraws three more photos from his metal briefcase and hands them Robert.

Robert looks at the first photo: it is a shot of the vagrant's face; his cloudy eyes and exposed teeth.

He flips to the second photo: it is a close-up of the vagrant's gnarled left hand; boils, pock marks, warts and craters cover the surface. A stainless steel tweezer excises a small bug from one of the sores.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
In addition to that, his chest and back are covered with some very strange markings.

Robert flips to the third photo: it is of the vagrant's bare back. Eleven blackened handprints are scorched into his flaccid skin.

Robert hands the photos back to Harry, who neatly files them away inside his steel briefcase.

ROBERT
What caused those burns?

MAJOR DILLET

We do not know. The man is witless and unable to speak.

Robert nods, pondering the odd information he has been given.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
How does this involve the military, you are probably wondering?

ROBERT
I was was wondering how this involves me specifically, but yes, that too.

MAJOR DILLET
You are a highly regarded military psychiatrist and it turns out that this man is one of ours. He has been believed dead for thirty years. His very existence has caused us to do some research, which has led to other discoveries...and enigmas.

HARRY
Before the Major discloses anything else, I must inform you that all of this information is highly classified. Is that understood?

ROBERT
It is.

HARRY
You may not repeat what we've told you or are about to tell you to anyone-- not even your wife.

ROBERT
There's very little risk of any disclosure there, don't worry.

MAJOR DILLET
Good. We would like for you to come with us to Fort Ingram and examine the prisoner.

ROBERT
I have some appointments today.

HARRY
I spoke to your secretary earlier and told her to reschedule them.

Robert suppresses his irritation at being pushed around; he nods acquiescently.

Major Dillet and Harry stand.

MAJOR DILLET
Our helicopter is waiting.

ROBERT
Will I be back this evening?

MAJOR DILLET
You will not.

Robert takes out his cellular phone.

ROBERT
Let me tell my wife that duty calls.

INT. HELICOPTER - AFTERNOON

Robert, Major Dillet and Harry sit in the helicopter, bright sunlight blazing through the window, christening them. The pilot, a young woman of twenty-two years named PRIVATE JAMES, chews gum while guiding the aircraft. The mechanical WHIRR of the blades necessitates that the occupants speak loudly in order to be heard.

MAJOR DILLET
(to the Pilot)
Private James.

PRIVATE JAMES
Yes Major, Sir?

MAJOR DILLET
When do you estimate our arrival at Fort Ingram?

Private James chews her gum twice, as if to divine from it the answer to the question.

PRIVATE JAMES
I'm wrestling with some bothersome tailwinds, but we should be there no later than 16:00 hours.

MAJOR DILLET
We need to be there by 15:30 to meet the other party.

PRIVATE JAMES
I can make that time, but the ride'll be a bit bumpy.

MAJOR DILLET

Bumps are fine, tardiness isn't.

PRIVATE JAMES
Yes Sir.

Private James pulls back on the throttle; the nose of the helicopter tilts up.

Robert's face pales. Major Dillet looks at him.

MAJOR DILLET
Haven't spent much time in helicopters?

ROBERT
No.

MAJOR DILLET
Look at the horizon-- it helps if you feel queasy.

Robert looks out of the side window, focusing on the line where the orange Montana hills join the clear blue sky.

The helicopter RATTLES and dips. Robert unconsciously clutches at his seatbelt.

Harry, reading his newspaper, looks at Robert. Robert smiles, his face covered with a sheen of sweat.

Harry looks down at the paper; he shakes his head derisively

HARRY
I wish that they'd bring back those detective strips they used to have- better than all of this talking animal nonsense.

EXT. FORT INGRAM - 15:30

The Fort is a cluster of utilitarian rectilinear buildings, enclosed by three circumscribing barbed-wire fences. Military Police walk the perimeter, M-16s slung over their shoulders, sunglasses hiding their eyes from the glaring sun. The helicopter sits in the central landing pad and from it emerge Major Dillet, Harry and Robert...whose gait is comparable to that of a drunkard's.

Major Dillet and Harry do not slow their pace for the nauseated doctor.

INT. FORT INGRAM COUNCIL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A large oval table of dark varnished wood lies in the center of the room, surrounded by thirty chairs. A slide projector sits at the rear of the table, its lone glass lens watching like a unblinking robotic eye. The room is carpeted with a

navy blue rug.

Around the table sits the trio from the recently deactivated silo: Tyler, Bodell and Kirsten.

Major Dillet, Harry and Robert walk into the room. The awaiting trio stands up upon their arrival.

MAJOR DILLET
Doctor Linderman, this is Chief Tyler, Corporal Bodell and radiological specialist Doctor Kirsten Thomas, all of whom are currently working under Missile Maintenance Team, Special Ops.

Robert, still pallid from his ride over, nods to the trio.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
Please have a seat.

The trio seats themselves; Robert walks over to the table and clumsily stumbles into a plush chair.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
Harry.

Harry walks over to the slide projector; he twists a knob beside the projector and the twenty overhead lights in the ceiling dim to one third their former brightness. Harry then presses the small yellow button atop the projector. CLICK.

A small film screen is lowered into the room by an unseen mechanical device. Major Dillet walks beside the screen.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
All of this information is highly classified and may not under any circumstance be repeated or related in part or in full to anyone outside this room under penalty of court-martial. If anyone here should violate this mandate, I will make it my personal business to see that the offender receives the maximum possible penalty for his or her crime.

Major Dillet looks around the room, surveying the quartet.

Robert brushes the beard of sweat from his face with the back of his hand.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing; nodding)
Harry.

Harry presses a green button on the projector. CLICK-RATTLE.

A map of the United States fills the screen. The country is peppered with numerous little red dots; at the bottom of the picture it reads: 'Strategic Arms Decommission, 1991.'

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
When Bush Senior implemented the Strategic Arms Decommission Act, four hundred and fifty-two nuclear missile sites were decommissioned throughout the States. The volatile elements were removed, the power was cut, holes were drilled and filled with ammonium nitrate topped with blasting caps. The explosives were then detonated.

CLICK-RATTLE. The screen shows a collapsed silo: an concave depression about fifty feet in diameter.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
This one is in South Dakota.

Major Dillet looks over a Harry and nods. CLICK-RATTLE

Upon the screen is a close-up photo of a plastic-covered identification card, tattered, warped and abraded. The bottom of the card is a complex network of slots and divets. The name on the card is Ralph Bernard.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
This card was found on the vagrant we picked up in northern Montana. The card itself is of a type defunct since the mid-seventies--it is a punch card designed to interact with pneumatic tubes.

Major Dillet looks at the assembled party.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
The card identifies Ralph Bernard as a maintenance worker in a nuclear missile silo of which we had no prior knowledge. Upon learning of the prisoner's military status, Chief Harry Sidler and I and several other

persons I am not at liberty to name commandeered the prisoner and summarily imposed a gag order on the Sheriff and all who had come into contact with him. That was six weeks ago. Since that time we have uncovered precious little information, although we have reached certain conclusions based on omissions, vagaries and two spools of microfiche located in Phoenix, Arizona.

CLICK-RATTLE

An aerial photograph of Northern Montana appears; rocky with little swatches of green and craters of shadow.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
A silo was decommissioned and its existence was quickly and deliberately covered over.

CLICK-RATTLE

The screen is filled with a blow-up of the first aerial photo. A square shadow has been circled in red.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing; to Tyler and Bodell)
Does that look like anything to you, Chief Warren and Corporal Bodell?

Tyler scratches his silver mustache.

TYLER
It does, Major Sir.

BODELL
You think it's the gangway hatch to this lost silo, Major Sir?

MAJOR DILLET
We do. We can only assume that there was some blunder, some mishap which necessitated this...this concealment of the truth. There was much debate over how to deal with this issue, and ultimately we decided to send in a team of specialists to examine the facility.

Major Dillet eyes the quartet he has assembled. The room is

silent for a moment. Robert looks a bit confused; Major Dillet eyes him and nods.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
Doctor Linderman, your services are required in case others such a Ralph Bernard still inhabit the silo, which seems unlikely...though his very existence makes this entire situation atypical.

TYLER
Sir, have you any knowledge of whether or not the silo in question was properly deactivated before it was abandoned?

Major Dillet and Harry exchange serious glances.

MAJOR DILLET
We know very little, Chief Warren. There might be an armed Titan II missile down there or maybe just a bunch of possum and raccoons.

Major Dillet looks at Kirsten.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
If your hourly millirep readings are above 5000, you are to abandon the mission, but otherwise you are to proceed and see what you can uncover. We need to know what is down there, but we don't need anyone getting radiation poisoning or cancer.

Robert does not like the sound of either suggested option.

The door to the room opens; two men wearing earth-tone camouflage enter. The first fellow is a tall, slender thirty year-old African American male; his name is CALVIN. The second is a muscular male of forty with blue eyes, a shaven head and a long scar across the bridge of his nose; his name is GONNENSON.

Calvin and Gonnenson come to an abrupt stop and salute Major Dillet.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
Lieutenant Calvin Jones is a demolitions expert and a twice decorated soldier. Captain Bjorn

Gonnenson is a tactical expert and has absolute command over this mission.

Bodell looks at the two soldiers and grimaces.

Tyler sees Bodell's expression and glares at him.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
You leave tomorrow at 05:00 hours. Everyone is excused to have some chow and tie up loose ends. You'll find the cafeteria food here to be well above average.

The company stands up, salutes the Major and walks towards the door. Robert does not leave; he looks at Major Dillet.

ROBERT
Sir, might I see the prisoner...so that I have some idea of whom we might encounter down there?

MAJOR DILLET
You may, but don't expect to have much in the way of conversation with him...or much of an appetite afterwards.

INT. CAFETERIA - LATER

The cafeteria is a quiet place in which several OFFICERS enjoy their diners, read or speak quietly on cellular phones. The fluorescent lighting and linoleum floor make it somewhat austere. Seated together towards the rear of the space are Tyler, Bodell and Kirsten; they have plates of steaming food sitting before them.

Bodell cuts into a piece of roast beef and then swirls it around like a mop in the adjacent sauce and mashed potatoes.

BODELL
Those soldiers looked like a lot of laughs. And that shrink...he looked like he was going to faint when Dillet said we were going into a silo.

Bodell puts the food into his mouth, chews vigorously with his oversized teeth and continues talking.

BODELL
(continuing)
The worst thing about this mission- other than the possibilities if cancer and death- is that I had a

date with a very liberal woman tomorrow evening. Operation: sodomy.

KIRSTEN
You are a disgusting.

Tyler looks at Kirsten and shakes his head.

TYLER
Don't encourage him.

BODELL
Perhaps if my commanding officer were more supportive, I wouldn't need to lash out in such a childish manner.

Tyler stares at his plate as he eats, unwilling to engage Bodell.

Gonnenson and Calvin walk into the room; they walk towards the steam table and cold food bar where they pick up plates and silverware rolls.

Gonnenson picks up tongs and with them extricates a fresh mesclun green mix from the cold bar; Calvin scoops up romaine lettuce, croutons and caesar salad dressing.

BODELL
(continuing; whispered to Kirsten)
They're getting salads. Salads! I told you they were gay.

Kirsten looks at Bodell; her brown irises roll down to his slightly protruding belly.

KIRSTEN
Do your dates tell you they like that little pouch you're developing?

Bodell sucks in his gut.

BODELL
What are you talking about?

KIRSTEN
Any koala bears in there?

Calvin sprinkles some shaved parmesan atop his salad and sits at a nearby table, nodding amicably at Tyler, Bodell and Kirsten as he does so.

Gonnenson stands in front of the roast beef; he picks up the carving knife and slices into it.

He cuts a three inch thick piece off of the roast and places it on top of his salad, flattening the mound. He looks coldly towards Tyler, Bodell and Kirsten and then looks away.

Gonnenson takes his platter and walks to the opposite corner of the room. He sits down, facing the wall, hunches over his food and begins to eat.

BODELL
(whispered)
I like the black one better.

INT. STEEL ELEVATOR - SAME

Major Dillet, Harry and Robert stand inside of the steel elevator, the walls of which glow with the green luminance of the overhead fluorescent lights. The three men are silent.

Robert stares at the digital counter on the wall: ...2, ...1, ...B, ...SB, ...UG1

Robert swallows and rubs his ears, as his inner coils pop.

...UG2, ...UG3, ...UG4

BING. The elevator stops. The three men stand in silence for a moment.

The doors slowly, smoothly, silently drift apart.

INT. UNDERGROUND HALLWAY - SAME

The hall is a world of white. The unblemished white walls, white linoleum and bright white lights cause Robert to squint as he follows Major Dillet and Harry. Their shoes CLACK and echo like a trotting horse's hooves.

They pass by two MPS, each dressed in a dark blue uniform and carrying a semi-automatic pistol at his hip. Both men salute Major Dillet.

MPS
Major.

MAJOR DILLET
Private. Lieutenant.

Robert looks at the handsome square-jawed men and corrects his posture while tucking in his shirt.

The trio comes upon a door with no handles. CLUNK. The door swings open.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - SAME

Robert follows Major Dillet and Harry into the dark room,

dimly lit by three tiny specular lights in the ceiling. One wall of the room is made entirely of glass. The door closes behind them with a CLUNK.

The glass glows and clears, admitting a view into the adjacent room. Lying on a bed is Ralph Bernard; he has been washed and redressed since the incident on the Montana highway. His neck and arms and hands are covered with small circles and squares of gauze, so many that it looks as if they are snowflakes from some recent storm.

Ralph Bernard stares blankly at the ceiling; his bared teeth occasionally CLICKING, as if in secret Morse-code communication.

ROBERT
Has he been medicated?

HARRY
Yes. Sedatives. Tranquilizers. Anti-anxiety pills. Anti-psychotics.

Robert walks up to the glass and watches the prostrate prisoner CLICK silently to the air above him.

ROBERT
Did he appear lucid after ingesting the psychotropics?

HARRY
There was no appreciable affect. His only response to other people thus far has been violence.

Robert turns to face the Major.

ROBERT
May I speak with him, Major Sir?

MAJOR DILLET
Two other psychiatrists have spent entire days with him and gleaned nothing. It is a far better use of your time to get some chow and some rest.

Robert is about to protest, but the Major shakes his head, 'no.'

Ralph rolls over in bed, revealing his bare back: it is covered with blackened grooves in the shape of human hands.

MAJOR DILLET
(continuing)
We found the skull of a rat in his feces, Doctor Linderman: he is

irredeemably gone.

INT. SLEEPING QUARTERS - NIGHT

The room is a small cubicle with a slender bed, upon which Robert sits, holding the receiver of a hard line phone to his ear.

ROBERT
Hey Laura it's me...I guess you're out. I'm going to be on assignment for all of tomorrow, but hopefully I'll be able to give you a buzz tomorrow night. Bye.

Robert takes the receiver from his ear and brings it towards the cradle. He then raises the receiver back to his ear.

ROBERT
(continuing)
I love you.

Robert hangs up the phone.

EXT. REAR COMPOUND - BEFORE DAWN

A military van sits parked in the compound, its bluish-white lights shining upon the perimeter fence.

Seated in the driver's seat is Gonnenson. He says nothing and stares straight ahead. Calvin stands outside the van, drinking a cup of coffee.

Tyler, Bodell and Kirsten walk towards the vehicle, they each wear navy slacks with white shirts. The men carry small backpacks; Kirsten's is quite sizable. Bodell looks exhausted. Calvin waves to the advancing trio.

Robert, carrying a rucksack, walks through the outer fence, past three MPS and toward the van. He wears the same tan slacks and white shirt from the day before.

ROBERT
Good morning.

TYLER
Howdy.

KIRSTEN
Good morning.

CALVIN
Hi.

The group converges around the van.

ROBERT

We just throw our stuff in the back?

Bodell hurls his backpack into the rear of the vehicle as if it were a hot shot-put.

BODELL
Yeah.

Calvin sips his coffee and looks at Bodell.

CALVIN
You hungover?

BODELL
No...merely suffering the consequences of a long night of phone sex.

Calvin looks at Kirsten and Tyler.

TYLER
Don't encourage him.

Gonnenson twists the van's ignition; the vehicle RUMBLES to life.

Robert, Kirsten and Tyler walk towards the rear of the van, unslinging their backpacks.

The van RUMBLES in neutral; Gonnenson presses the accelerator once causing it to ROAR.

BODELL
I guess that means 'hurry the fuck up.'

CUT TO:

INT. VAN - DAWN

The crew sits in the van, their features brought out upon their faces by the low-hanging sun in the east. Gonnenson drives the car at a fast pace with a firm hand. Immediately behind him sit Tyler and Calvin.

Upon the cushioned benches in the body of the van sit Robert, Kirsten and Bodell. Robert sits opposite Kirsten and Bodell; Bodell is asleep.

Robert looks at Kirsten's handsome face, flatteringly modeled by the dawn sun. He glances down at her left hand: there is no ring.

Robert looks up from her hand, back at her face; she stares out at the rising sun.

KIRSTEN
I'm not married.

Robert reddens a little.

ROBERT
Never met the right fellow?

Kirsten's mouth twists into a wry curl.

KIRSTEN
No.

Kirsten's eyes flicker to Robert's left hand.

KIRSTEN
(continuing)
And what is Mrs. Linderman like?

Robert shrugs.

ROBERT
She likes to eat beef cheeks.

Kirsten is a bit befuddled by Robert's response.

INT. VAN - MORNING

The sextet rides along in silence. Bodell stares at his cellular phone, annoyed.

BODELL
Fuck. We're out of range. I just received a text message saying, 'I am wearing the silk kimono and stiletto high heels' and we're out of fucking cell phone range.

ROBERT
Who exactly is prancing about in that attire at seven thirty in the morning?

BODELL
It's not seven thirty in Japan.

Tyler turns back from the front seat and looks at Robert.

TYLER
Don't encourage him.

Tyler turns back to face the front windshield.

BODELL
(to Tyler)
Since I'm no longer distracted, let's continue our game, 'Chief.'

I'll take your pawn at Q5 with my bishop.

Tyler does not turn around.

TYLER
My knight at B3 takes your bishop.

BODELL
Well my queen moves out to K5.

TYLER
I castle.

BODELL
You are foul!

Robert listens to the conversation, disbelief registering upon his face.

ROBERT
Are you guys playing chess by memory?

TYLER
I am. But Bodell keeps forgettin' things...which is why he's goin' to lose.

BODELL
Mark my words Tyler: I will rape your Queen.

Kirsten elbows Bodell in the arm.

EXT. MOUNTAINOUS REGION - ELEVEN AM

The dark green van rolls along the dirt road, cutting a wake of disturbed sand and dust.

INT. VAN - NOON

The noon sun shines brightly overhead, flattening the dry earth outside the van. Robert is reading the western novel; Bodell and Kirsten are asleep, leaning upon each other; Calvin is playing a game on his cellular phone; Tyler and Gonnenson stare through the front windshield.

The van slows.

TYLER
Kirsten. Bodell.

Kirsten sits up, at attention. Bodell, mouth agape, remains asleep.

TYLER

(continuing)
Wake him please.

Kirsten nudges Bodell; the shark-faced man stirs with an unhappy GROAN.

The van stops.

EXT. ROCKY REGION - SAME

The van sits amidst the copper-colored terrain, a conspicuous dark green cube. The doors to the vehicle open like a bug's wings.

Robert, Tyler and Calvin climb out; each man stretches.

Kirsten and Bodell climb out afterwards, each wearing sunglasses.

Gonnenson steps out of the van, kicking the door shut behind him. He is dressed in a rust, beige and black camouflage uniform and has a compact hardshell pack slung upon his back.

Gonnenson withdraws a compass from one of the six pockets running up his pant legs. He studies it for a moment and quickly fixes a position.

GONNENSON
Grab your gear. We walk the final mile.

Bodell looks up at the blazing sun and then at the immediate surroundings.

BODELL
Can we vote on that? It's pretty hot out here.

Bodell looks at Kirsten and then Tyler for support. They say nothing.

Gonnenson walks towards the raised ridge, out of earshot.

Robert, Calvin, Tyler and Kirsten go to the rear of the van and open the hatch. Bodell reluctantly follows.

BODELL
(continuing; quietly)
Is that how it is?

Robert withdraws his pack from the pile; he then hands the large olive-colored pack over to Kirsten.

KIRSTEN
Thanks.

BODELL

(to Kirsten)
We're just gonna listen to what that meatball says?

KIRSTEN
Yes. He's the ranking officer and he's far better informed than we are.

Calvin withdraws his pack, a small waterproof rucksack.

BODELL
But why walk?

TYLER
Suppose there are hostiles in this silo, Bodell. Should we give them immediate access to our vehicle and comm systems?

Bodell angrily yanks his bag out of the van.

BODELL
(muttering)
Pointless...stupid...useless...

CALVIN
(to Bodell)
I'd advise you not to mouth off to Captain Gonnenson.

BODELL
I'd advise you not to give me advice.

KIRSTEN
Take it easy-- he only trying to keep you out of trouble.

Tyler, Calvin and Robert start walking towards Captain Gonnenson, their faces tilted down to avoid the direct sun pouring down on them.

Kirsten walks forward and then turns back to face Bodell.

KIRSTEN
(continuing)
Come on.

Bodell shakes his head, but reluctantly follows.

EXT. FLATLAND - LATER

Clouds have congregated before the sun; the hue of the terrain is vibrant beneath the darkened sky.

Gonnenson stands before a square depression in the ground,

sunken about two feet. He holds a mesh bag containing six eight-inch metal pipes in his hands.

Tyler and Calvin lead the rest of the crew towards the Captain.

BODELL
My knight at B4 takes your pawn at K3.

TYLER
My bishop at R6 takes your knight...and puts you in check.

BODELL
I push up the pawn at K2.

TYLER
Are you sure you want to do that?

BODELL
I most definitely am.

TYLER
I see mate in three moves, but let's continue this later.

Bodell looks furious but says nothing; Kirsten smiles at him, to further aggravate him.

The company nears Gonnenson, who is now busy taking the metal pipes out of the bag.

Robert looks at Kirsten, her eyes hidden by her mirrored sunglasses.

She turns her head and looks back at him.

KIRSTEN
So...working with a woman is a novelty, I take it?

ROBERT
Would you believe me if I said that you remind me of my wife?

KIRSTEN
I wouldn't.

ROBERT
Well...give me some more time to come up with something else.

Tyler and Calvin stand at attention before Gonnenson, saluting.

TYLER

Captain.

CALVIN
Captain.

GONNENSON
Soldiers.

Gonnenson screws together the pieces of hollow metal pipe while looking at the rain clouds above.

Bodell, Robert and Kirsten fall into place behind Tyler and Calvin, saluting.

Gonnenson twists a pointed spade onto the end of the four foot long pole. He starts to dig into the depression with the segmented shovel.

GONNENSON
(continuing)
Help me clear this away.

Calvin and Tyler drop their bags, open them and fish inside. Each man produces a small army green hand-shovel.

BODELL
(to Kirsten; quietly)
You pack your shovel?

KIRSTEN
(quietly)
I packed enough-- my bag is overstuffed with radiological equipment as it is.

The head of Gonnenson's shovel cuts into the earth; Tyler and Calvin apply themselves to the task with their hand shovels.

Bodell eyes Robert.

BODELL
Where's your shovel?

ROBERT
I wasn't given any time to gather supplies.

KIRSTEN
(to Bodell)
He's a psychiatrist-- he's not here to dig.
(to Robert)
Don't listen to him-- he just feels badly because he forgot to pack one.

The Captain, Calvin and Tyler continue to cut into and fling

away the orange red Montana dirt. Gonnenson thrusts the head of his shovel deep.

CLANG.

BODELL
I hope that wasn't a warhead.

Gonnenson looks up at Bodell. Bodell grins; Gonnenson neither smiles nor blinks...he just stares at Bodell.

Bodell, unnerved, looks away.

GONNENSON
Let's clear this.

INT. STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

A thin line of light grows into a square of bright radiance as the hatch to the stairwell is opened.

All six members of the company stand around the square, looking down into the darkness. Rain begins to drip from the sky, like sweat from tired old man.

Gonnenson looks at Calvin.

GONNENSON
Accompany Doctor Thomas down there so that she can determine whether it's safe to investigate.

Calvin pulls his sidearm- a forty-four, semi-automatic pistol- from his shoulder holster and checks the clip and safety. Kirsten fishes in her bag and withdraws a small black box with a digital display and two antenna.

ROBERT
Is that a geiger counter?

With a tattoo of nimble fingers, Kirsten adjusts the instrument's settings.

KIRSTEN
More or less. It lets us know the type and saturation of radioactivity in millireps.

Calvin straps a headlamp over his forehead.

Kirsten sheaths the device in a loop on her belt; she withdraws a headlamp from her pack and pulls it over her forehead. She looks over at Calvin.

KIRSTEN
(continuing)
Shall we?

Calvin CLICKS on his headlamp and walks down the stairs, his thick boots CLUNKING loudly upon each stair.

Tyler and Bodell look at Kirsten-- they are concerned.

BODELL
Be careful.

TYLER
Yeah.

Kirsten nods, CLICKS on her headlamp, and follows Calvin. She looks down at the stairs beneath her; they are covered with sand, rust and dust.

Calvin SNEEZES from further down the stairwell.

INT. GANGWAY PASSAGE - SAME

Calvin walks into the passage. The walls are of dark metal and covered in dust. Steel pipes run the length of the hall, far past the throw of Calvin's headlamp.

Kirsten enters the hall a moment later. Calvin SNEEZES.

KIRSTEN
Bless you.

CALVIN
Thanks.

Calvin shakes his head.

CALVIN
(continuing)
That dust is everywhere.

Kirsten withdraw her millirep reader and dials it on with a short sustained BEEEEEP. Calvin swivels his headlamp along the walls while Kirsten checks her readings.

KIRSTEN
It's fine. Any readings here are nominal and ineffectual-- the others can come down.

Calvin plucks his walkie-talkie from his belt and presses the speak bar which elicits a CRACKLE.

CALVIN
Doctor Thomas says it's safe to push in.

GONNENSON (O.S.)
Copy.

Kirsten sheaths the reader and looks around. The CLANGING footsteps of the approaching party reverberate in the hall.

Gonnenson, Tyler, Robert and Bodell enter the space; each man wears a headlamp except for Robert.

CALVIN
(to Robert)
You need a lamp?

ROBERT
Yeah.

Calvin withdraws a handlantern from his rucksack and walks over to Robert. The Lieutenant gives the dark green cylinder to the doctor. CLICK. Bright white light glares into Robert's eyes; he squints and turns the light away.

BODELL
Good thing that wasn't a gun.

Tyler looks down the hall.

TYLER
This passage is enormous.

GONNENSON
What is your opinion of the site?

TYLER
It seems like an inhabitable missile silo...and possibly an independent one, with its own launch command and power supply. They had two like this in New Mexico and one in Phoenix, though not quite this big.

GONNENSON
What is the likelihood that we'll come across nuclear materials?

Tyler shakes his head.

TYLER
The first thing that happens when you close down a missile silo is that you remove the nuclear elements. There shouldn't be any such materials here.

BODELL
Probably shouldn't be any bug-infested derelicts either, but there was at least one...according to my sources.

Gonnenson pauses, but does not look at Bodell.

Robert looks from the bald, muscular man over to Bodell; the earlier is of stone and the latter is of oil.

After a tense moment of silence Gonnenson speaks.

GONNENSON
Let's go.

Calvin and Gonnenson take the front and walk down the gangway. Bodell is about to follow; Kirsten puts her hand on his shoulder.

KIRSTEN
(quietly)
I think it's best to separate you two.

Kirsten and Robert go second, followed by Tyler and Bodell.

BODELL
(to Tyler)
Why do I always get stuck with you?

Tyler does not respond.

The sextet walks along the dark passage; metal pipes and tubes run along the walls and ceiling, occasionally studded by rusted valves and bolts.

Bodell looks at Kirsten's rear end. He nudges Tyler and points. Tyler ignores him.

KIRSTEN
Quit looking at my ass, Bodell.

BODELL
(to Tyler)
How did she know?

INT. GANGWAY PASSAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The sextet walks in silence, dust motes swirl about them.

Robert lowers his lantern to the ground. He sees pieces of metal scattered on the floor, twisted, rusted and molten.

ROBERT
What's this...shrapnel?

Kirsten nudges Robert and points ahead.

KIRSTEN
They've stopped.

Robert looks up: ten yards ahead, Calvin and Gonnenson stand,

awaiting the other four.

BODELL
Why've they stopped?

Tyler ignores him.

Robert and Kirsten quicken their pace a little, as does Bodell. Tyler does not speed up.

Robert watches the ground as he nears Gonnenson and Calvin; more pieces of twisted and burnt metal lie scattered about, like crumbs of food.

Robert and Kirsten reach Calvin and Gonnenson, followed by Bodell.

Calvin and Gonnenson swivel their heads so that their headlamps illumine the hall in front of them. The passage ends in a mass of molten, twisted steel, the texture of which resembles a gnarled oak made of metal.

BODELL
(continuing)
Mission over?

Tyler reaches the group; he surveys the wreckage.

GONNENSON
What are your thoughts, Chief?

TYLER
This place was deactivated, though we need to get in to know how thoroughly.

Tyler walks over to the twisted end of the passage; he looks up, his headlamp illuminating two concave markings in the ceiling.

TYLER
(continuing)
It looks like ammonium nitrate with some blasting caps brought the ceiling down and secured this ingress.

Gonnenson nods.

ROBERT
Assuming that Ralph Bernard was trapped inside for all these years, how do you suppose he got out, Captain Sir?

GONNENSON
Over there, doctor.

Gonnenson points to and illumines a hole seven feet up in the wall of twisted steel: the orifice is less than three feet in diameter.

ROBERT
He climbed through that?

BODELL
I've seen bigger birth canals.

KIRSTEN
Are we going to crawl through?

Gonnenson and Tyler exchange grave glances.

A heavy silence descends upon the sextet.

GONNENSON
We are.

KIRSTEN
I'll go first...I'm the smallest and I need to check readings anyway.

GONNENSON
No. Lieutenant Jones goes first and he goes alone.

Calvin takes off his rucksack and empties his supply belt.

Robert looks nervously at the darkened orifice and then at Calvin.

GONNENSON
(continuing; to Tyler)
What is likely to be on the other side of this wreckage?

Calvin CLICKS his safety on and tucks his handgun beneath his belt.

TYLER
Another passage leading to a circular stairwell...assuming that that wasn't blown too, Sir.

Gonnenson nods; he looks at Calvin. Calvin nods.

CALVIN
Ready to go, Sir.

Gonnenson nods.

Calvin finds a hand-hold in the steel and pulls his lithe body up towards the dark point of ingress.

INT. SLENDER TUNNEL - SAME

Calvin's headlamps flares inside the tube, illuminating the sharp, twisted interior, comprised of steel, rocks, dirt and iron. Holding himself up to the lip he examines the interior.

GONNENSON (O.S.)
Can you see the opposite end?

CALVIN
No...it's beyond the range of my light, Sir. The passage looks like it was tunneled by hand and then supported with whatever metals the digger could find and solder together.

Calvin's beam sweeps over the patchwork construction of manifold materials.

CALVIN
(continuing)
This must have taken years to make.

Calvin reaches into the hole, running his long dark fingers over the interior, looking for something solid. His fingertips dig into a substantial piece of twisted steel.

Calvin gently hauls himself in, his slender body curving in an almost serpentine manner. He slides inside the passage; there is not enough room for him to crawl on his hands and knees. He presses the speak bar on the walkie receiver near his throat; it CRACKLES.

CALVIN
(continuing)
I'm in.

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(from the walkie)
Good luck, Lieutenant.

Calvin brings his left shoulder forward and with it his left arm; he leans on the elbow and draws it back, shuffling his prostrate form forward. He shimmies again, leaning on his right shoulder and elbow.

CALVIN
(muttering)
This truly sucks.

Calvin shimmies again, looking straight ahead. The end of the passage is completely black.

Calvin shimmies again, shuffling forward. A barb of jutting metal pokes at his forearm; he carefully bends it back down.

Calvin looks ahead. He sees two white dots in the black distance up ahead. Calvin stops.

The dots sit in the distant blackness of the tunnel. They disappear for a moment and then reappear.

Calvin presses the speak bar. The walkie CRACKLES; Calvin winces at how loud the walkie sounds in the enclosure.

CALVIN
(continuing; whispered)
I believe someone is watching me from the other end of the tunnel.

Calvin withdraws the pistol tucked beneath his belt.

The two white dots disappear and a moment later reappear again.

CALVIN
(continuing)
He just blinked. Orders?

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(from walkie)
How quickly can you exit?

CALVIN
Not very...and the space requires that I do so backwards.

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(from walkie)
Safety off.

Calvin CLICKS his gun's safety off.

CALVIN
Affirmative.

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(from walkie)
Verbally engage him.

Calvin inhales deeply and looks at the two white dots in the distance.

CALVIN
Hello. I am Lieutenant Calvin Jones of the US Military. I am here on a seek and recover mission. Please identify yourself.

The two white dots disappear, reappear and then disappear again.

Calvin waits in silence, gripping his handgun.

The white dots reappear again, larger than before...closer to Calvin. Calvin trains the sight of the pistol between the two white dots.

CALVIN
(continuing)
Identify yourself.

The dots disappear.

Calvin's eyes flicker about nervously.

A bald RAT the size of a house cat rushes up the passage towards Calvin; its sagging skin is white and mottled with yellow sores-- its large eyes reflect Calvin's headlamp as two white dots.

BLAM. BLAM. BLAM.

The rat SQUEALS; its body comes apart in hunks resembling stewed tomatoes. Calvin squeezes the speak bar. CRACKLE.

CALVIN
(continuing; into the walkie)
I just shot the biggest rat I've ever-

Four more white dots appear in the distance; they grow larger as their owners- two more rats- rush towards Calvin. He trains his gun on the rats and fires.

BLAM. BLAM. BLAM. BLAM. Squeals echo in the passage; smoke from the seven fired rounds obfuscates Calvin's view.

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(from walkie)
How many rounds do you have left?

Two more dots appear, followed by four more. Calvin squeezes the speak bar. CRACKLE.

CALVIN
Not enough.

Calvin starts to shimmy backwards, out of the passage. The oversized, bald, white-skinned rats rush towards him.

INT. GANGWAY PASSAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Gonnenson stands at the orifice, looking at the dark circle with grave concern. He holds a pistol in his left hand.

Robert, Kirsten, Tyler and Bodell stare at the point of

ingress in horror. Tyler and Bodell both hold firearms in their right hands.

CALVIN (O.S.)
(through walkie)
They're coming. Fuck.

Gonnenson CLICKS the safety off of his handgun.

The dark orifice flashes white with the BLAM of gunfire.

Calvin's boots emerge from the hole, followed by his legs and then his torso.

Gonnenson holsters his pistol and then reaches up and grabs Calvin's waist; he pulls the remainder of the Lieutenant out.

Calvin falls backwards from the hole onto the ground, an enormous rat biting into his cheek. Calvin hammers the rat with the butt of his emptied gun. The rat SQUEALS.

GONNENSON
(to Bodell and Tyler)
Cover the hole!

Bodell and Tyler train their pistols on the tunnel entrance.

Gonnenson grabs the rat by its neck and closes his powerful fingers around its neck; the vermin's eyes bulge and it releases Calvin. Gonnenson's meaty hand shuts with a sickening CRUNCH. Bodell kicks the rat's corpse from Calvin's face.

Calvin raises his hand to his cheek, from which hangs a flap of torn-open skin.

Bodell and Tyler stare down their sights at the hole; nothing else emerges, though the SQUEAKS of other rats are audible.

GONNENSON
(continuing; to
Robert)
Tend to him.

Robert is pale and frightened from what he has just witnessed.

ROBERT
I...I didn't bring any medical s-
supplies...I'm not even that kind
of doctor...

Gonnenson flings his hardshell pack to the ground.

GONNENSON
Top compartment.

Calvin sits up, shaking. He presses the flap of skin back in

place; blood drips down his cheek, onto his neck. Kirsten takes Robert's arm, spurring him to action; they walk over to Gonnenson's hard shell case.

Gonnenson reaches into one of the pockets along his left pant leg and from it withdraws a box. He opens the box: it is filled with one hundred and forty-four bullets.

GONNENSON
(continuing)
Chief Warren, keep your gun on the hole.

Tyler nods, keeping the point of his handgun trained on the hole. Gonnenson looks at Bodell

GONNENSON
(continuing)
Help me load my spare clips.

Bodell reluctantly lowers his pistol and walks towards Gonnenson. The bald muscular Captain stares at the hole while withdrawing six clips from webbed pockets within his vest.

BODELL
You're not going in there are you?

Gonnenson does not respond. Bodell reaches him.

BODELL
(continuing)
Did we forget to bring an exterminator? It's always something.

Gonnenson hands Bodell three clips.

GONNENSON
Load.

Robert opens the uppermost compartment of Gonnenson's hard shell case. It contains gauze, swabs, anti-inflammatory creams, anti-bacterial creams, peroxide concentrate, sleeping pills, painkillers, needles and surgical thread.

Robert withdraws the anti-bacterial cream and several swabs. He looks over at Calvin, who is calm, albeit stunned.

ROBERT
I hope you've had your shots, Lieutenant.

CALVIN
I was in Malaysia less then a year ago-- immediately before that they gave me every vaccine known to man.

Robert nods as he saturates a swab with anti-bacterial solution. He dabs it gently along the suture in Calvin's face. Calvin winces as the fluid effervesces into pink froth at the wound's perimeter. Kirsten kneels nearby.

Bodell and Gonnenson slot cartridges into the six clips. CLICK...CLICK...CLICK...CLICK...

Tyler shifts his weight while keeping his gun trained on the hole. Nothing stirs within the darkness.

Feeling that Calvin's wound is satisfactorily clean, Robert presses fresh gauze upon it.

ROBERT
(to Kirsten)
Hold this in place.

Kirsten nods. She presses the gauze firmly to Calvin's face; he winces but says nothing. Robert secures the gauze with adhesive.

ROBERT
(continuing)
You'll probably need stitches when we get back, but this should work for now.

Gonnenson slides an elongated clip into his handgun where it locks with a CLICK and then fits two others into the webbing inside his vest. Bodell hands him three more loaded clips; the Captain takes and slides them into flank pockets.

GONNENSON
(to Tyler)
Stand down and take the Lieutenant's walkie.

Tyler, sweating and breathing a bit too hard, lowers his pistol and walks beside Calvin.

Gonnenson eyes the darkened entrance to the passage; Robert, Kirsten, Calvin and Bodell glance at it.

GONNENSON
(continuing)
I'm going in.

Gonnenson looks at Calvin; Calvin nods.

BODELL
Why would you willingly do such a thing? Did you see the size of that fucking rat...Captain? Sir?

Gonnenson, ignoring Bodell, puts wax plugs in his ears.

CALVIN
Good luck, Captain.

Gonnenson climbs up to the hole and crawls inside. He disappears into the darkness.

CALVIN
(continuing; to Bodell)
You are getting on his bad side.

BODELL
I wasn't counting on him sending me any Christmas presents.

Calvin looks at Kirsten and Tyler and then shrugs.

KIRSTEN
(to Calvin)
You've worked with the Captain before?

CALVIN
Once. In Bosnia in ninety-six.

KIRSTEN
He's pretty strict, I assume?

Calvin nods his head and then looks over at the dark hole. Calvin looks back at Kirsten.

CALVIN
There was a guy named Ritchie Mathews on the assignment, tall red-headed prankster, always had something funny to say.

He kept mouthing off, questioning the Captain's orders, making jokes, though he never transgressed to outright insubordination-- he followed any orders given, just with an excess of noise and comments. Throughout the assignment, Captain Gonnenson ignored Ritchie. The Captain went about his business: setting up surveillance missions as well as two small assaults.

The passage illuminates with three quick flashes: BLAM, BLAM, BLAM.

The quintet stares at the hole; the moment is a heavy one.

Tyler presses the speak bar, eliciting a CRACKLE, and then

raises the walkie to his mouth.

TYLER
Are you all right, Captain Gonnenson?

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(through walkie)
Fine. Just rats.

The tension dissipates...though not wholly. Kirsten looks back at Calvin.

KIRSTEN
So what happened?

CALVIN
After the assignment ended, we got some leave time back in the States, and some of us- including Ritchie- went to a bar in Oregon where a lot of military people go. Ritchie starts to get pretty rowdy- he's had about five shots- and Gonnenson walks in. He walks over to Ritchie and says, 'I'm off duty.' Ritchie just stares up at Gonnenson, not saying anything.

'We can step outside or I can embarrass you in front of your peers.' Ritchie says, 'Is there a third option?' Gonnenson reaches into Ritchie's mouth, grabs his tongue and knees Ritchie's jaw shut, causing him to bite off a hunk of it. Gonnenson stares at Ritchie and says, 'You want to continue this here, or you want to go outside?' Ritchie's mouth fills up with blood and he starts sobbing, hysterically. Everyone in the place is shocked. Gonnenson knees Ritchie in the face, breaking his nose. He collapses. Gonnenson looks down at him and says, 'You want to continue this here or do you want to go outside?' Sobbing and bleeding, Ritchie crawls outside.

Kirsten, Bodell, Robert and Tyler exchange nervous glances.

CALVIN
(continuing)
I don't know exactly what happened to Ritchie, but I never saw him

again.

BODELL
The Captain sounds like a fucking psycho.

The tunnel flashes six more time: BLAM, BLAM, BLAM, BLAM, BLAM, BLAM.

Bodell looks at Robert.

BODELL
(continuing)
You agree with me, right doc? The Captain is a psycho?

ROBERT
The term borderline personality disorder might be applicable. Regardless, it sounds like you'd better not antagonize him while we're down here.

TYLER
(to Calvin)
Where's he been since then? Black Ops?

Calvin shrugs.

CALVIN
That's what I assume, but I don't know.

BODELL
How can a guy like that still be in the military?

KIRSTEN
You're joking right?

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(through walkie)
The passage is clear. Come through, one at a time. Remove your packs and drag them behind you-- there isn't much space.

Bodell shakes his head in dismay. The crew takes their packs from their shoulders and drops them to the ground.

Robert complies, though his hands shake as he does so.

Tyler sucks in his gut and tightens his belt.

TYLER
Sure hope I fit.

Calvin is the first into the hole.

INT. SECONDARY ANTECHAMBER - LATER

Robert climbs to the end of the passage, towards the room in which the other five wait. The five headlamps of the crew spin around, illuminating the place like capsized police sirens. The space is a twenty-by-ten enclosure with a spiral staircase in its center. A pile of dead rats lies in one corner.

GONNENSON
Doctor Thomas?

Kirsten looks at her millirep reader.

KIRSTEN
Nominal levels...nothing to worry about unless we were to stay here for about three months.

Gonnenson points to the stairwell.

GONNENSON
(to Tyler)
This leads where?

Tyler kneels at the edge of the hole and looks down into it. His headlamp traces the spiral of stairs, step by step by step...until the light falls off into blackness.

TYLER
It should lead to the primary ingress...a vault-like door that opens into the body of the silo.

Robert, aided by Bodell and Kirsten's supporting hands, emerges from the passage, head first.

ROBERT
Thanks.

Kirsten nods.

Gonnenson pins the walkie onto Bodell's belt and slaps the receiver in his hand.

GONNENSON
(to Bodell)
Examine downbelow.

Bodell suppresses his irritation and nods. He walks to the spiral stairwell and looks down, into the darkness.

BODELL
It's pretty dark down there.

Bodell looks back at the party; they watch him silently. He SIGHS and walks down the stairs.

INT. SPIRAL STAIRCASE - SAME

Preceded by the circle of light from his headlamp, Bodell climbs down the stairs, his thick boots CLANGING on the metal.

He tilts his head down, the cone of light picking each step from the darkness. He looks up; his view of his companions utterly obfuscated by the stairs he has already descended.

Bodell mutters silently as he continues down.

A net of white appears from nowhere, wrapping Bodell's face like a shroud.

BODELL
Fuck.

Bodell stumbles backwards on the stairs, falling upon his rear end. He claws at his face, pulling away...thick spiderwebs.

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(through walkie)
Report.

Bodell spits the detritus from his mouth and wipes the web away, though the silken threads adhere to his eyes and ears.

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(continuing; through walkie)
Report.

Bodell brushes the web from his face; he reaches for his left ear, pulling at the spiderweb dangling from it. He yanks the silken threads out.

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(continuing; through walkie)
Report.

BODELL
Impatient bastard.

Bodell squeezes the speak bar, eliciting a CRACKLE.

BODELL
(continuing)
Just got snagged by some spiderwebs, give me a sec to continue.

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(through walkie)
Proceed immediately.

Bodell shakes his head angrily as he rises to his feet, a few tendrils of web are still attached to him. He proceeds down the stairs.

The circle of light from his headlamp illumines each step before him as he continues down the spiral stairwell; his boots CLANG on the dusty stairs of corrugated metal.

The disk of light slips off of the next stair and falls off into darkness; Bodell stops. He kneels upon the penultimate step and looks past the final step, down into the blackness.

A white light glares up at him; his breath catches in his throat.

Bodell swivels his head; the light below mirrors the action perfectly.

Bodell spits past the last step. There is a moment of silence, followed by a PLOP as the expectoration strikes water. He clamps the speak bar on his walkie; it CRACKLES.

BODELL
The stairwell doesn't reach the bottom...and it's flooded down there.

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(through walkie)
Do you see the ingress?

Bodell swivels his head around, the light reflected like a bluish-white fang in the water fifteen feet below. He squeezes the speak bar; it CRACKLES.

BODELL
Wait a minute.

Bodell's light shines upon a half-submerged vault door, twenty feet across the chamber.

BODELL
(continuing)
I see it.

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(through walkie)
How deep is the water?

CRACKLE.

BODELL
Judging by how much of the door is

submerged, I'd guess two feet... maybe a bit more.

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(through walkie)
Lieutenant Jones will come down and assist you.

CRACKLE.

BODELL
Copy.

Bodell sits on the steps, dangling his legs over into the darkness. He takes off his headlamp and shines it below him, upon the black silk of the water's surface. He grimaces and shakes his head in disgust.

He shines the light on the submerged vault door; the edges are molten and cracked.

He shines the light again at the dark, tar-like pond beneath him.

CHILD'S WHISPERED VOICE (O.S.)
Help us.

Bodell jerks upright, flashing his light in every direction. he sees nothing. He squeezes the speak bar. CRACKLE.

BODELL
Did you just radio me?

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(through walkie)
Nobody radioed you. Did you hear something?

BODELL
I thought I did. Nevermind.

Bodell shines the light around the dark, dank enclosure. The CLANGING footsteps of Calvin's approach echo within the space. Bodell shines his light up the stairwell.

BODELL
(continuing)
Lieutenant?

CALVIN (O.S.)
I'm almost there.

BODELL
Watch out for spiderwebs.

Calvin descends the stairwell, halting five steps above Bodell. Calvin looks down at the water fifteen feet beneath

the final step.

BODELL
(continuing)
I'm not much for swimming in septic fluid...especially with cat-sized vermin and anomalous bugs spending their spring break down here.

CALVIN
Don't sweat it, Corporal. My boots and pants are waterproof--just watch the line.

Calvin reaches into his pack and withdraws a slender metal twine; he begins wrapping it around the iron rail. He grips the line with his fingerless gloves, testing its security.

CALVIN
(continuing)
Let me know if anything swims my way.

BODELL
I will...and thanks.

Calvin slides down the line. His boots sink beneath the water; his knees sink beneath the water; his thighs sink beneath the water. He grimaces as his waist sinks beneath the water, followed by his navel. Finally, his feet touch the bottom.

BODELL
(continuing)
Looks deeper than I thought.

Calvin turns to face the partially submerged door. He walks toward it, navel-deep in filthy water.

CALVIN
Did you notice the edges of the door?

BODELL
Yeah. Looks like it was welded shut and then broken open.

Calvin reaches the door; he grabs the central wheel and spins it counter-clockwise.

BODELL
(continuing)
The other way.

Calvin stops and then turns the wheel in the opposite direction. THUNK. The door swings a few inches forward.

Black water pours towards the opening.

CHILD'S WHISPERED VOICE (O.S.)
Come inside. Save us.

Bodell looks around for the source of the whispers.

BODELL
Did you hear that?

Calvin looks up at Bodell.

CALVIN
What?

BODELL
A child's voice...whispering.

CALVIN
Nope.

The water level lowers as it floods past Calvin, through the opened, vault-like door. Bodell squeezes the speak bar. CRACKLE.

BODELL
The door is open.

GONNENSON (O.S.)
(through walkie)
We're coming down.

CUT TO:

INT. SECONDARY ANTECHAMBER - LATER

Robert climbs down Calvin's rope, joining the other five, all of whom stand shin-deep in what remains of the filthy water. Kirsten looks at her millirep reader.

KIRSTEN
Nothing to worry about yet, though the levels are noticeably higher.

GONNENSON
What are the implications of such readings?

KIRSTEN
They indicate the presence of some nuclear materials, though how much or in what state I cannot say.

BODELL
Did anyone just hear that?

The quintet looks at Bodell.

GONNENSON
What?

BODELL
A voice...a child whispering. That's the third time I've heard it.

ROBERT
What did the child say?

TYLER
(to Robert)
Don't encourage him.

BODELL
I'm not joking Tyler.

Robert, Tyler and Gonnenson exchange glances.

ROBERT
What did you hear?

BODELL
'We're inside...save us...'

ROBERT
Did anybody else hear this whispered voice?

The other four shake their heads.

ROBERT
(continuing)
Have you ever experienced any delusional or schizophrenic episodes in the past?

BODELL
I'm not crazy, asshole.

KIRSTEN
Don't be belligerent Bodell. 'Hearing voices' is pretty high up there on the insanity symptom list.

Bodell dismisses Robert and Kirsten with a wave of his hands.

BODELL
Forget it.

Gonnenson looks at Calvin.

GONNENSON
(to Calvin)
Take Corporal Bodell's sidearm.

BODELL
Wait a minute-

Tyler and Kirsten gently grab hold of Bodell's shoulders.

TYLER
Don't.

Calvin splashes forward and stands in front of Bodell. He grabs the handle of Bodell's pistol and withdraws the weapon; he CLICKS the safety on.

BODELL
Happy hunting.

GONNENSON
(to Tyler)
Watch him for any atypical behavior.

TYLER
I will, Captain.

BODELL
Yeah like if I start championing the women's movement, shoot me.

GONNENSON
(to Calvin)
Proceed.

Calvin nods and walks past the opened door.

INT. ENTRANCE PASSAGE - SAME

Calvin, Gonnenson, Kirsten, Robert, Bodell and Tyler file into the passage, which is cylindrical and composed of corrugated and beaded steel. The passage terminates in another door, which has been blown open like some blackened metal flower.

CALVIN
Judging from the inward push of the explosion, I'd say that the charge was set from further inside the silo, Captain Sir.

Calvin and Gonnenson walk towards the twisted perimeter of steel...all that remains of the door.

GONNENSON
Dr. Thomas?

Kirsten takes a reading: BEEP.

KIRSTEN

About the same...a tiny bit more.

Gonnenson nods.

CREAAAAK. BANG.

The entire sextet turns around. The door they entered the passage through is shut.

Tyler and Bodell walk towards the door.

GONNENSON
Wait.

Tyler and Bodell stop.

BODELL
I told you I heard someone down-

GONNENSON
Silence.

The sextet stands in silence. The wheel in the middle of the door spins; the steel pins inside lock into place with eight sequential THUNKS.

The crew stands still and tacit for a long, weighty moment; Bodell, Kirsten, and Tyler exchange worried glances.

GONNENSON
(continuing)
Have you an explanation for this occurrence, Chief Warren?

TYLER
Every missile silo has its own failsafes...in case an accident like the one in Arkansas occurs.

We might have set off a containment trigger, though I'm not sure how it could function after all these years...and with no apparent power source.

GONNENSON
Try the door.

Tyler and Bodell walk to the door. They grab the wheel in its center and attempt to turn it. It does not budge even a fraction of an inch.

Robert looks from Tyler to Gonnenson, trying to determine how panicked he should or should not be.

GONNENSON
(continuing; to

Calvin)
Lieutenant, can you blast that door with what you have on you?

CALVIN
I should be able to blow through the central lock and then dismantle the pins, one by one, Captain Sir.

GONNENSON
How long will that take you?

CALVIN
Two hours. Maybe more.

GONNENSON
You stay here and begin working on it while we investigate the silo.

Calvin nods.

GONNENSON
(continuing)
Let's proceed.

Calvin walks back towards the sealed door. The other five make their way down the passage to the blown-apart door.

INT. COMMON AREA - SAME

Gonnenson, Kirsten, Robert, Bodell and Tyler walk into a room with toppled plastic chairs and a moldering couch.

A vending machine lies on its side, the front of it shattered and covered with divets. Beside it stands a refrigerator covered with brown stains.

GONNENSON
Chief?

TYLER
Looks like a recreation room, Captain. There are probably some living quarters nearby.

Robert swings his handlantern around; its luminance floats across the filthy floor, upon which lay deteriorated magazines. A crusty picture of a football player receiving a pass; a torn and sodden picture of a woman wearing bell-bottomed pants and nothing else; a picture of Richard Nixon with devil horns drawn upon his forehead and the word 'Murderer' written over his eyes.

TYLER
(continuing)
There.

Tyler points his headlamp and index finger to a small stairway leading down from the far end of the common space.

Bodell leans over to pick up the picture of the half-naked woman. He admires her beneath the glare of his headlamp

KIRSTEN
Put that down.

BODELL
No. You already gave the black guy my gun-- I'm keeping this.

Bodell folds the paper and puts it in his rear pocket.

GONNENSON
Let's move on.

BODELL
I'm hungry.

TYLER
Don't.

Bodell opens the fridge. He turns his head away as a powerful odor assails him. Robert, Tyler and Kirsten cover their mouths.

Bodell turns his head back to the fridge. It is filled with bald, oversized rats, sealed in zip-lock bags.

The bags are swollen with the gases of putrefaction; some of the rats have burst, their grayish-pink entrail wrapping their bodies like creeper vines. Bodell SLAMS the fridge shut.

He looks away; Gonnenson stands before him, staring at him with cool, hard eyes.

BODELL
I didn't think that...it would be...

Gonnenson turns away from Bodell and walks towards the stairs leading down from the common room.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Gonnenson, Kirsten, Robert, Bodell and Tyler walk down the five steps into the long narrow hallway. Written upon the wall, in thick black letters is the phrase, "We were murdered." Four doors line each side of the hall.

TYLER
Looks like the residential hall.

CALVIN (O.S.)
(through Gonnenson's walkie)
Captain, I'm going to detonate the charge in three...two...one...

A weak BOOM sounds in the distance.

Robert points the beam of his handlantern to the ceiling. The rectilinear encasements of long-dead fluorescent bulbs loom like sheer plastic coffins. The quintet walks up the hall.

GONNENSON
Readings, Dr. Thomas?

KIRSTEN
No change, Captain.

GONNENSON
Chief, check the rooms on the right with Dr. Thomas and the Corporal; I'll look into the ones on the left with Dr. Linderman.

Robert walks over to Gonnenson. Gonnenson switches his headlamp to a brighter setting; he then withdraws a handgun, the scope of which he turns on with a CLICK. A red laser shines from the scope.

The Captain leads Robert to the first door on the left.

GONNENSON
(continuing)
Open it, doctor.

Robert's face is pale; it is clear that he is very apprehensive, and yet he does not hesitate. He twist the handle and shoves the door open. Gonnenson's headlamp glares inside: the room is empty. A bed, a cabinet, a mini-fridge and a small desk furnish the place.

Tyler leads Kirsten and Bodell to the first door on the right.

BODELL
(peevishly)
Since I'm no longer armed, I guess I'll get the door.

Bodell twists the knob and flings it wide. Tyler and Kirsten's headlamps shine inside. Kirsten's stomach sinks; Tyler's eyes widen. Bodell, upon seeing his friends' reactions, looks inside.

The room has two beds; in each one lies a putrefying human corpse. Each corpse holds a gun, the barrel of which is lodged in its mouth. Bodell looks around the room; the walls

immediately behind the corpses' skulls are stained black.

BODELL
(continuing)
Yuck.

Further up the hall, Robert flings a door wide for Gonnenson. The duo's shining lights reveal a desiccated corpse, hanging from the ceiling fan by a rope tied around its distended, fibrous neck. The corpse's mouth is open in an interminable, albeit silent, scream.

ROBERT
Oh God.

Gonnenson motions for Robert to follow him up the hall, to the next door.

Tyler looks across the hall at Gonnenson.

TYLER
Captain, we've got two bodies here...looks like suicide.

GONNENSON
And we saw one more. Keep looking.

Tyler, Kirsten and Bodell move to the second door. Bodell flings it wide.

Kirsten and Tyler's headlamps illuminate the grim tableau. A nude female corpse lies face-down on a bed frame: her wrists and ankles are bound to the rusted steel rectangle. She is blindfolded and has three rusted knives stuck in her back. Above her is written: "Traitor."

At her feet lie five male corpses: two are nude and three are not wearing pants. All of them have bulletholes in their heads and consequent dark stains behind the exit wounds. Nine bottles of whisky lie upon the floor, empty and with peeling labels.

Bodell looks ill; tears sparkle in Kirsten's eyes; Tyler stares without breathing or blinking.

KIRSTEN
What the hell happened in this place?

Up the hall, Robert flings the door wide. Gonnenson and he look in. The room's walls are a glossy black, almost as if painted with a coat of tar. Robert and Gonnenson's lights play across the glistening surface...and then, within the cones of light, a slow eddy ripples across the surface. A RUSTLING noise spread throughout the space.

Thousands of large black cockroaches slide down the wall, away from the glaring lights. Robert grabs the door handle and SLAMS it shut. He backs away.

Down the hall, Tyler nods to Bodell; Bodell tries the next door-- it is locked. Tyler, Kirsten and Bodell exchange glances.

BODELL
Should I kick it in?

KIRSTEN
Can you?

Bodell KICKS the door. It does not yield. Bodell kicks it again. It does not yield.

KIRSTEN
(continuing)
Should I try?

BODELL
Go to hell.

Bodell kicks the doorknob; it bends. He kicks the doorknob again; the knob GROANS and breaks off, falling to the ground.

The door slowly opens. Kirsten and Tyler's lights shine inside. Three GAUNT OLD MEN stare back at them, each man covered with scars, burns and pustulent boils: they are alive.

For a brief instant, Tyler, Kirsten and Bodell stare at the Gaunt Old Men; the Gaunt Old Men stare back.

CALVIN (O.S.)
(through walkie)
I've got some bad news Captain.
I wasn't able to breach the
central lock.

The Gaunt Old Men rush Tyler, Kirsten and Bodell.

Tyler withdraws his handgun and points it at the leg of the foremost aggressor, an Old Man with jagged brown teeth and one completely white eye.

TYLER
Halt! Halt or I will be forced-

The Old Man wraps his hands around Tyler's neck. Tyler presses the tip of his gun into the Old Man's thigh. BLAM. The Old Man falls down with a wretched GROAN. He grabs Tyler's leg and pulls him off balance; the Chief falls to the floor.

The second Old Man, MOANING through his loosely hanging jaw, rushes Kirsten; she shoots him in the foot: dark blood

splatters on the floor; his toes twist and bend in obtuse angles; the Old Man collapses.

The third Old Man, an African American with a few errant puffs of white hair on his pocked and contused skull, seizes Bodell by the throat; Bodell punches the Old Man in the face...clear fluid squirts out of the Old Man's broad nose. Bodell kicks the Old Man in the chest, his foot impacting with a wet CRACKLE. The Old Man vomits a deluge of ochre-colored fluid upon Bodell's neck and chest. Bodell, repulsed, dances backwards.

Tyler grapples on the floor with his assailant.

TYLER
(continuing)
Stop, stop...we're here to help-

The Old Man with the white eye bites into Tyler's left wrist, his teeth sinking deep.

He rips his head back, a confluence of veins, arteries and nerves caught in his cracked brown teeth. Tyler SCREAMS as his life pours out in crimson jets from his wrist.

A red dot appears in the very center Old Man's white eye. BLAM. The back of the Old Man's head erupts in a blossom of gray tissue, white bone and dark carmine blood.

A red dot appears upon the left ear of the Old Man who just vomited upon Bodell. BLAM. The Old Man's head caves in around the dark bullethole.

Gonnenson trains his laser sight on the third Old Man, the one Kirsten shot in the foot.

ROBERT
Don't! He's down-- maybe we can't get some information from him.

Gonnenson keeps the red dot of his laser sighting on the remaining Gaunt Old Man's forehead, but does not fire.

Bodell sees Tyler on the ground; the Chief clutches his chewed up wrist. Bodell's eyes immediately fill with tears. He drops to the ground beside Tyler and then looks up at Robert.

BODELL
Help him, help him! He's bleeding to death goddammit!

Robert runs over to Tyler and Bodell; Kirsten, stunned speechless, kneels beside them.

Robert whips off his belt and wraps it securely around Tyler's arm, just below his savaged wrist. He looks at the

ground beneath the Chief; it is blanketed with the dying man's blood. Robert checks Tyler's pulse; Bodell, tears in his eyes, looks at Robert. Robert looks away.

BODELL
Do something for him you fucking asshole!

Kirsten puts her hand on Bodell's shoulder; she says nothing.

TYLER
(to Bodell)
Leave him alone. He can't help.

Bodell looks down at his friend. Tyler looks back up at him.

TYLER
(continuing)
Tell Gertrude...that...that I'll be waiting for her. And to do whatever...whatever makes her happy...I won't mind.

Bodell starts to cry. Tears pour down Kirsten's face.

TYLER
(continuing)
It was mate in three. I had your Queen nailed down.

BODELL
I was going to sacrifice my bishop at K5.

Tyler, surprised, looks up at Bodell.

TYLER
Really?

Tyler's eyelids flutter; he COUGHS.

TYLER
(continuing)
I...didn't...think that you...

He WHEEZES and summarily stops breathing.

Bodell looks up at Gonnenson.

BODELL
Why didn't you shoot that crazy fuck before he did this? What the fuck were you waiting for?

GONNENSON
A clear shot. I didn't have one.

Bodell, irate, rises from Tyler's side.

BODELL
He's dead for no goddam reason. Let's get him- and ourselves- the fuck out of here.

GONNENSON
We must finish our investigation, Corporal.

BODELL
I'm getting my pal out of here. You can look around if you want to: I'm not interested in playing detective.

A red dot shines on Bodell's forehead-- Gonnenson has pointed his pistol at him. Kirsten GASPS; Robert's eyes widen.

GONNENSON
I will not tolerate insubordination, Corporal Bodell. Dr. Thomas has verified that there are active nuclear elements within this silo; we cannot leave without knowing what they are, who has possession of them and for what purpose they are being used.

BODELL
And if I don't comply, you're gonna shoot me? That seems pretty fair.

GONNENSON
This is not about what is or isn't fair-- it's about the safety of hundreds of thousands of innocent people. If you want to settle up with me afterwards, I'll gladly oblige.

Bodell does not respond, he just stares belligerently at the Captain, the red dot glowing like a cigarette end upon his forehead.

GONNENSON
(continuing)
Where do you stand, Corporal?

Robert looks at Gonnenson's eyes and his thick, steady hands.

ROBERT
He's not bluffing.

Bodell turns his face away from Gonnenson; the red dot shines

upon his right temple.

KIRSTEN
For Christ's sake Bodell, say you'll follow orders.

Bodell SIGHS and shakes his head, resigned to his fate.

BODELL
Let's do this and get out of here.

Gonnenson points his pistol at the Old Man's forehead.

GONNENSON
(to Robert)
See if you can get any useful information out of him.

Robert kneels beside the Old Man, a shuddering pile of limbs, elbows and knees. The silo inhabitant wears a rotted uniform and had very little hair hanging from his mottled, dry scalp.

ROBERT
We have come to take you away from here...to take you someplace safe.

The Old Man looks up; his eyes are blinded by cataracts.

ROBERT
(continuing)
What is your name?

The gaunt Old Man tries to speak but his grossly swollen tongue, withered lips and broken jaw make it impossible.

ROBERT
(continuing)
Do you understa-

The Old Man and Bodell abruptly look away up the hall; they both look frightened.

BODELL
Did you hear that? Sounded like two children's voices this time.

ROBERT
(pointing to the Old Man)
He heard it too. He reacted to whatever you just heard at the exact same instant.

Robert kneels closer to the Old Man; Gonnenson's red sighting dot still shines upon his mottled forehead.

ROBERT

(continuing)
Did you hear someone talking?

The Old Man nods. He pulls open his shirt and points to three burn marks on his chest in the shape of human hands.

ROBERT
(continuing)
The person who did that to you...that's who spoke?

The Old Man nods, his loose jaw wobbling like a hungry dog's tongue.

ROBERT
(continuing)
Are there more like you down here?

The Old Man nods.

ROBERT
(continuing)
Are there more than five of you?

The Old Man nods.

ROBERT
(continuing)
Are there more than ten of you?

The Old Man nods.

ROBERT
(continuing)
Are there more than twenty of you?

The Old Man nods.

Robert, Kirsten and Bodell look at Gonnenson.

KIRSTEN
I don't want to aggravate the situation Captain- and I appreciate the difficult dilemma facing you- but how many people are you willing to kill, in order to investigate this silo? These are Americans in here. They are not the enemy: they are sick and need help.

Gonnenson does not reply; Kirsten looks to Robert for support.

ROBERT
A larger team- informed by the knowledge we've gathered- might be able to handle this situation more

delicately...and with less loss of life.

GONNENSON
Let's move. Corporal Bodell, you go first.

BODELL
Can we at least put the Chief in a room, so these things don't fuckin' devour him?

GONNENSON
There is no time for sentimentality-- we'll retrieve his body on the way out. Go.

Bodell looks down at Tyler. He leans over and shuts his eyes. He reaches for the handgun in Tyler's hand.

GONNENSON
(continuing)
Take it, but do not fire unless I say so. Take his light too.

Bodell takes Tyler's sidearm and headlamp and walks toward the far end of the hall.

Bodell, Gonnenson, Kirsten and Robert leave the hall.

The lights of the quartet disappear around the corner; the Old Man with the hanging jaw is absorbed by the silent veil of black.

INT. STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Bodell, Gonnenson, Kirsten and Robert walk down the stairs. Their boot CLANG on the corrugated steel, echoing loudly in the enclosure.

Robert points his handlantern up; spiderwebs drape the ceiling like diaphanous muslin. Running through the webbing are occasional black and crimson lines, which branch apart like tributaries seen from a plane window.

Robert looks at Kirsten who is looking back at him. He eyes Gonnenson, concerned. She nods her head, similarly concerned.

The quartet continues to CLANG down the long, straight stairwell.

A WOMAN stands further down the stairs, awaiting them on the landing two flights below. She is in her seventies and leans on a crutch-- she has only one leg.

GONNENSON
Identify yourself.

The Woman looks up at them, but says nothing.

GONNENSON
(continuing)
Identify-

WOMAN
My name is Ingrid. I heard the gunfire-- are you all right?

GONNENSON
What is going on here?

INGRID
Come with me to the dwelling of The Protected. It is not safe here.

Bodell starts to walks down toward Ingrid.

GONNENSON
(to Bodell)
Wait.

INGRID
Trust me-- not all of the residents are as mad or malicious as those you've encountered. Follow.

GONNENSON
No. There are nuclear elements in this silo. We need to evaluate their stability before we do anything else. Take us to the warheads.

Ingrid, two flights of stairs down from the quartet, stands still and silent.

INGRID
You misjudge your authority. The military lost its right to make mandates when they sealed us in here thirty-three years ago.

KIRSTEN
Was there a radiation leak?

INGRID
Yes. Two of the warheads became unstable...and it was feared all ten would go...or that one might detonate. It could have been safely contained had the government been as concerned about

us as it was its own records and reputation, but...

There is a moment of silence as Ingrid shakes her head.

INGRID
(continuing)
You will follow me or I will leave you to fend for yourselves against the infested ones.

Ingrid turns around, pivoting skillfully on her crutch and lone leg.

GONNENSON
Follow her.

Bodell, Gonnenson, Kirsten and Robert walk down the steps.

At the bottom of the stairs, Ingrid comes upon two doors: she walks through the door on the right. The quartet tacitly follows.

INT. OCTAGONAL PASSAGEWAY - SAME

Preceded by Ingrid and their own lights, Bodell, Gonnenson, Kirsten and Robert walk into the octagonally-shaped passage.

Bodell looks around the angular hall, shaking his head.

BODELL
(quietly to Gonnenson)
This is a perimeter passage-- it circumnavigates the missile bay.

Gonnenson nods to Bodell, but continues to follow Ingrid. His narrow eyes scan the hall's sides, ceiling and floor.

Robert looks at and studies the one-legged woman; she looks back furtively and quickens her pace.

ROBERT
(whispered to Kirsten)
She's deceiving us.

Robert turns back and looks at the passageway they just traversed; it is now covered with webbing, veined with thick black and red threads. He nudges Kirsten; she turns and looks at the crystalline net now obfuscating the rear of the passageway.

Kirsten walks beside the Captain and leans to his ear.

KIRSTEN
(whispered)
Captain. The passage behind us is sealed.

INGRID
There is no use whispering-- all of us can hear you.

GONNENSON
Stop. Explain what is happening right now.

The quartet stops, but Ingrid hobbles onward.

GONNENSON
(continuing; to his crew)
Turn around. We go back up the passage and through the other door.

Robert walks towards the silken veil now blocking the passage egress, the crew behind him. He shines his handlantern upon the black and red lines running through it.

ROBERT
They look like arteries...or nerves or something.

GONNENSON
Proceed.

Robert nears the webbing; he presses through the first layer, a nearly diaphanous sheet which sticks to him but does not hinder his passage. He nears the thicker layer. An explosion of light fills the hall and Robert falls back to the ground, GROANING.

A handprint has been seared upon his neck; a few wisps of smoke float up from his burnt shirt collar.

BODELL
The voices just said: 'Follow Ingrid or we will hurt you.'

Robert looks up at Bodell.

ROBERT
I heard them too...the childrens' voices.

Kirsten shines her light at Robert; she reaches towards his left ear and from his ear canal extricates a weft of silken fibers.

INGRID
Come on.

Gonnenson look at Ingrid; he points his gun at her.

GONNENSON

Tell me what is going on or you loose your remaining leg.

Ingrid walks down the hall, undeterred by his threat.

BLAM.

Bodell, Kirsten and Robert look in the distance: Ingrid has collapsed to the ground.

KIRSTEN
How could you? She was-

INGRID
Well goddam you! You shot up my crutch.

Ingrid sits up. Gonnenson walks towards her. There is a flash of light; Gonnenson falls to the ground.

Gonnenson's face is seared with a red handprint. His ruptured left eye dribbles down his face like mucus from a child's nose. He regains his footing and walks towards her again.

Robert and Bodell, hearing the voices, look at one another and then at Gonnenson.

ROBERT
Stop! The children said they'll kill you if you don't-

GONNENSON
I'll make her talk.

Gonnenson trains his red dot upon Ingrid's groin. His hand is abruptly yanked upwards. BANG. The bullet CLANGS against the ceiling of the passage.

Gonnenson's right wrist darkens in hue and begins to narrow. Bones CRUNCH within his arm; his fingers splay in all directions. The gun falls from his hand and CLANGS upon the floor. He GRUNTS, suppressing the yells that rise in his throat, searching for a way out. His wrist continues to narrow CRACKLING and CRUNCHING until his hand dangles uselessly from his arm.

Gonnenson reaches for the fallen gun with his other hand. He grabs the weapon and trains the red dot again on Ingrid's groin. His forearm SNAPS in a perpendicular compound fracture, creating a second elbow in the middle of his forearm; the arm slowly bends all the way back- accompanied by a series of POPS and CRACKS- until the gun points directly at his own face. He shuts his eyes.

BLAM.

Gonnenson's bald head erupts in a welter of carmine, bone and brain. The dead Captain collapses to the floor, mouth agape.

Ingrid stands up, supporting herself as best she can on the larger piece of her splintered crutch. She ambles toward the shocked trio.

Robert, Bodell and Kirstin exchange worried glances.

Bodell mouths the words, 'get ready.'

INGRID
Come on, The Twins want to see-

Bodell thrusts his hands at Ingrid and grabs her frail shoulders; he spins around and with his momentum flings her small body into the web obfuscating the rear of the hall.

The small, one-legged woman yelps as she sails into the net of suspended fibers. Her body stretches the mesh...and then tears it open.

Bodell, Kirsten and Robert dart through the aperture in the fabric, out into the hall. The webbing closes behind them, a couple threads of a barely visible electrical current gliding across its surface like eddies in a pond.

INT. STAIRWELL - SAME

Jumping over the prostrate and MOANING old woman, Bodell, Robert and Kirsten run toward the stairs, their boots STOMPING noisily on the stone floor beneath them. Robert shines his light on the adjacent wall of the landing, illuminating a metal door with curved corners and the sign upon it which reads, 'Maintenance 3B: Coolant and Exhaust'.

ROBERT
Should we try this door?

Bodell and Kirsten glance back but do not break stride.

KIRSTEN
No. That just circles the missile bay.

The trio reaches and runs up the stairs, PANTING, sweating.

Bodell points his flashlight up. At the top of the stairwell stands the Old Man with cataracts from the hall, blindly watching; he holds a rusty knife in his hands. Behind him stand two other silo DENIZENS, their silhouetted forms obscured by shadows.

BODELL
Fuck.

At Bodell's exclamation, Robert and Kirsten look up the

stairwell.

BANG. A flash of gunfire bursts like a white flower in front of one of the Denizens, briefly illuminating his gaunt, mottled visage.

Bodell CRIES out and grabs his bullet-lanced thigh.

BODELL
(continuing)
Go back, go back!

KIRSTEN
Where?

BODELL
Maintenance hall. Now.

BANG. The bullet WHINGS off of the steel, ricochets with a loud PING and then glances across Robert's right shoulder, scoring a red groove in his flesh; he drops his flashlight.

ROBERT
Goddammit!

Robert grabs his wound, blood welling up between his clenched digits.

The trio begins their hasty descent. Robert looks at the bottom landing: Ingrid is gone.

The trio reaches the bottom.

BANG. Robert, Kirsten and Bodell wince. The bullet CLANGS on the bottom step, PINGS off of the ceiling and then CRACKS upon the floor, sending up a burst of stone fragments that pepper Robert, Bodell and Kirsten's legs. They grimace and GRUNT in pain.

BODELL
Goddamn these fuckers.

Robert attaches himself to the vertical storm bar handle of the 'Maintenance: Coolant and Exhaust' doorway.

KIRSTEN
To the left, to the left.

BANG. The bullet CLANGS off of the bottom step, PINGS off of the ceiling and then CRACKS open the floor. Stones spray in all directions, RATTLING the steel walls and hammering Bodell and Kirsten in the lower back.

Robert grimaces, straining against the fixed lever. Kirsten raises her left foot and KICKS the storm bar over with the sole of her boot. The old hinge GROANS.

Bodell kicks the unbarred door open with his boot and barrels into the darkness; Robert and Kirsten follow.

INT. MAINTENENCE TUNNEL - SAME

Bodell, hunched over and gripping his bullet-pierced thigh with his left hand, shines his light at the door.

BODELL
Shut that!

Robert SLAMS the door shut.

KIRSTEN
The locks.

Robert spins the top dead bolt. Rust showers down, like dust from a rarely-cleaned shelf. CLANG. Robert spins the second deadbolt. CLANG.

Bodell lifts his hand from his leg and points his flashlight at his thigh.

BODELL
Yuck.

Bodell sets the flashlight down, takes his belt off and cinches it around the wound, both the bullet's entrance and exit.

BODELL
(continuing)
I am so glad that that dead asshole confiscated my gun, I can't even begin-

KIRSTEN
Not now.

BODELL
I've been shot-- I get to complain. I've earned that right.

KIRSTEN
Let's look for an eggress.

Kirsten turns back to face Robert.

KIRSTEN
(continuing)
You alright?

Robert lifts his blood-soaked palm from the glancing wound across his right shoulder.

ROBERT
It's not serious...just messy.

Can you get me something to tie it up with?

BODELL
Panties make for fine tourniquets.

Kirsten looks at Bodell and frowns.

BODELL
(continuing)
I've been told.

Kirsten looks back at Robert, sets down her flashlight and tears a piece of fabric from her left pant leg. She wraps it around Robert's shoulder.

ROBERT
Thanks.

Kirsten nods. There is a moment of silence where the trio ruminates upon all of the horrible things that they have witnessed.

ROBERT
(continuing)
What the hell is going on down here?

KIRSTEN
I have absolutely no idea.

BODELL
Let's get the fuck out of here and let someone else figure it out.

Something CLANGS loudly upon the outside of the door, startling the trio.

BODELL
(continuing)
Let's go. We're not doing anything just standing around.

Bodell turns away from the door and starts to walk down the narrow maintenence hall. Kirsten picks up her flashlight and follows.

Bodell, limping forward, points his flashlight into the darkness ahead. Kirsten, pondering the situation, chews her lower lip as she walks; Robert glances over his shoulder into the unlit void behind him. He looks away from the heavy darkness.

ROBERT
(to Bodell)
You hear any voices since we entered this hall?

BODELL
None of the magical variety, no.
You?

ROBERT
No.

Robert nods his head in affirmation.

ROBERT
(continuing)
Maybe whatever's inhabiting the silo can't access this tunnel.

Robert shifts his gaze to Kirsten.

ROBERT
(continuing)
Anything different about this passage?

KIRSTEN
It's a safe tunnel. Five feet of concrete, sealed with ten inches of steel on all sides.

Robert looks at the impregnable walls, floor and ceiling surrounding him.

KIRSTEN
(continuing)
It's made to withstand a nuclear attack on the silo itself.

ROBERT
Christ. If I didn't feel claustrophobic before, I sure as hell do now.

The group continues up the passage, their FOOTFALLS echoing loudly in the chamber...like fading heartbeats.

Bodell's eyes widen. He stops.

KIRSTEN
What?

BODELL
Did you hear that?

ROBERT
No. What'd you hear? Voices?

BODELL
No.

Something MOANS in the darkness up ahead.

BODELL
(continuing)
That.

ROBERT
Yeah.

KIRSTEN
Yeah.

ROBERT
Should we go back?

BODELL
To the dead end? To the stairwell where people shoot at us?

To the fucking haunted hallway where ghosts tear up badass army guys?

A plaintive MOAN followed by a low GROWL wafts out of the darkness up ahead.

KIRSTEN
It's getting closer.

ROBERT
You two want to face whatever is making that noise?

BODELL
How do you feel about sacrificing yourself for the greater-

KIRSTEN
You guys think you can shimmy up the walls?

ROBERT
I can.

Bodell tightens the strap on his leg and then nods.

From the darkness up ahead, the melancholic MOAN reverberates, followed by another long, low bestial GROWL.

Kirsten tucks her flashlight in her belt, plants her left foot against the left wall and her right foot against the right wall. Pressing against the rubber soles of her boots, she clambers up the walls in six strides. The outer soles of her shoes and the palms of her hands find support on the ridges that run the length of the hall. Her body is an X pressed against the ceiling.

Bodell (tucking his flashlight in his belt) and Robert clumsily follow her lead up the wall. The approaching creature MOANS in a sad and horrible way, the wail akin to a man dying of pneumonia.

Robert slips momentarily, but continues his ascent, wedging himself flat against the ceiling, braced against the ridged joins on either wall.

Bodell grimaces in pain as seeping blood darkens his left pant leg; he tightens the belt cinched around the wound even moreso. He is braced halfway up the wall.

KIRSTEN
Do you need a-

BODELL
(irritated)
I'll make it, I'll make it.

Bodell shuts his eyes, at war with his pain. The creature WAILS sadly, closer and louder than before. Bodell continues his awkward ascent.

The creature GROWLS. Kirsten turns her flashlight off.

KIRSTEN
Bodell. Your flashlight.

Suspended by a healthy and a tremulous, bullet-pierced leg, Bodell shuts off his flashlight.

The hallway falls into opaque, unadulterated darkness. The sound of Bodell shuffling up the wall is the only audible noise.

Bodell lets out a SIGH of relief as he braces himself against the metal joins.

BODELL
(whispered)
Kirsten.

KIRSTEN
(whispered)
Yeah?

BODELL
(whispered)
If we get out of this-

KIRSTEN
(whispered)
No. I won't.

BODELL
(whispered)

You weren't always a rug-muncher.

KIRSTEN
(whispered)
You're hairy and gross. Quiet.

Flattened against the ceiling, Kirsten, Bodell and Robert try to remain still and breathe quietly; muted footfalls approach them, accompanied by a dim CLICKING sounds.

DRIP. DRIP. DRIP.

The creature GROANS again, its plaintive wail succeeded by a long, low bestial GROWL. It is very close.

DRIP. DRIP. DRIP. DRIP. DRIP.

KIRSTEN
(continuing;
whispered)
Bodell. Is that your blood?

DRIP. DRIP. DRIP. DRIP. DRIP.

BODELL
(whispered)
No.

KIRSTEN
(whispered)
Check.

There is a shuffling noise as Bodell feels his leg.

BODELL
It's not-

ROBERT
(whispered)
It's me. I'm sweating.

DRIP. DRIP. DRIP. DRIP. DRIP.

BODELL
(whispered)
Great.

The creature GROANS. The claws of the beast's feet CLICK, CLICK, CLICK across the steel of the hall floor as it approaches.

DRIP. DRIP. DRIP. DRIP. DRIP. The beast stops. It noisily LAPS moisture from the ground.

DRIP. DRIP. It SNIFFS the air. SPLAT. SPLAT. SPLAT. The beast SNIFFS the air again.

BODELL
(continuing;
whispered)
My leg...

Bodell GRUNTS.

SPLAT. SPLAT. SPLAT.

BODELL
(continuing)
Fuck. I'm-

SLAMCLANG. GROWL. Bodell YELLS.

Kirsten CLICKS on her flashlight.

Upon the floor of the hall, in the circle of luminance, are Bodell, and a large, bald, veinous, lesion-covered DOG, with a long pink tail, gray eyes, a gray nose and oversized claws. The large hound stands upon Bodell's stomach; its teeth are clamped into Bodell's neck. Its rat-like tail swishes vigorously.

Bodell GURLGES as the beast shakes its head back and forth, in an attempt to break his neck. Kirsten and Robert pale at the sight.

Bodell CRACKS the bottom of his flashlight against the Dog's skull. It WHINES and releases his neck-

-and then lunges for his face. Bodell SHRIEKS as the bald, veinous, pustule-covered hound digs its teeth into his left eye socket.

Robert and Kirsten drop from the ceiling, CLANGING to the hall floor.

The Dog shakes its head furiously back and forth; its tail curls up in excited anticipation; its claws scratch at Bodell's chest. The hound yanks out Bodell's left eye; the optic cord SNAPS, spraying clear, gelatinous ocular fluid as if it were garden hose. Bodell SHRIEKS.

Kirsten hammers the Dog's skull with her flashlight. CRACK. The Dog YELPS. She hammers it again. CRACK. And again CRACK.

The Dog turns on Kirsten and GROWLS, its jagged teeth and gray nose smeared with gore.

Robert grabs Bodell's long steel flashlight, grips it with two hands and swings it like a baseball bat across the hound's snout. CRACK-CRUNCH! The Dog's muzzle SNAPS sideways, spouting blood from its nostrils in two florid gouts. The Dog WAILS and then collapses.

Kirsten and Robert train their lights on Bodell, who lies on his stomach, shuddering, his hands clutching his gory face.

Tear immediately fill Kirsten's eyes. She hurries toward and kneels beside him.

KIRSTEN
Bodell...

Kirsten rests her hand upon his shoulder.

CLANG. Kirsten and Bodell look back in the direction that they came from.

ROBERT
Was that the door...?

Kirsten nods and then looks back down at Bodell.

KIRSTEN
(to Robert)
Can you...help him?

Robert looks at the prone, shuddering man on the floor.

A footstep CLANGS, followed by another CLANG, and another CLANG...

ROBERT
(whispered)
Let's carry him.

Kirsten, shaken by the sight of her horribly mauled friend, nods. The footsteps grow louder, the slow tattoo echoing up the hall...CLANG, CLANG, CLANG...

BODELL
(weakly)
Just go...

Robert kneels beside Bodell and hooks his arm under the shuddering man's shoulder. Kirsten gets beneath Bodell's other arm and helps Robert support him in an upright position. Bodell GROANS and then passes unconscious, his head dipping forward, lolling on his limp, bitten, bloody neck.

Robert and Kirsten press on. The footsteps behind them are heavy and steady.

CHILD'S WHISPERED VOICE (O.S.)
Sssssssstop.

Robert and Kirsten exchange worried looks, but press on. The footsteps stop. The metallic sounds of a gun being cocked echo in the chamber. A red dot scurries across the floor like a cockroach and then shines upon the nape of Bodell's

neck. Kirsten and Robert see the luminous circle.

CHILD'S WHISPERED VOICE (O.S.)
(continuing)
Sssssstop. Will shhhhhhooooooot.

Robert and Kirsten stop. They turn around, the beams of their flashlights swiveling with them.

The light reveals Gonnenson, his hollow, burst skull tilted sideways on his neck, the open cavity of his head brown and gray. Kirsten pales; Robert collapses to his knees, dropping Bodell.

Gonnenson opens his mouth to speak...and from his lips issues the child's voice.

GONNENSON
Ffffollow or we'll hurt you.
Disobey and we'll hurt you...and
much worse.

Gonnenson's right arm abruptly jerks backwards, indicating the direction that the captives are to go in.

Gonnenson turns away from his captives, back toward the direction he (and his captives) came from. His head twists around one-hundred-and-eighty degrees on his neck, the impossible sight accompanied by series of CRACKLING noises.

Disbelief and horror show plain on Robert and Kirsten's faces.

GONNENSON
(continuing)
Nnnnnow.

Gonnenson proceeds back up the hall, his twisted-around face staring at the captives directly behind him. Robert and Kirsten carry Bodell and follow the dead man's lead.

Kirsten, supporting Bodell with her right arm and shoulder, aims the flashlight in her left hand just above Gonnenson's cracked open skull.

KIRSTEN
(whispered)
Do you see that...

She pans the flashlight left to right, left to right. The light catches upon hundred of nearly invisible fibers running from the hole in Gonnenson's head...up the hallway.

Gonneson reaches the opened door.

INT. STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Gonneson, watching Robert and Kirsten behind him, walks toward the door leading into the hall in which he was killed.

INT. OCTAGONAL PASSAGEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Robert and Kirsten, supporting Bodell, follow Gonnenson into the passage, through the aperture in the webs.

They continue walking up the hall...passing the spot at which Gonnenson's blood and brains splatter the wall in brown and gray clumps. The captain's hard-shell backpack lies nearby, untouched.

INT. VIEWING HALL - MOMENTS LATER

The trio follows behind Gonnenson. B-BEEP. BEEEEEEEEP.

Kirsten looks at the millirep reader at her belt, the caution light of which is blinking on and off. BEEEEEEEEP. Kirsten TAPS the device with her index finger. BEEEEEEEEEEP. She shakes her head and switches it off. CLICK.

KIRSTEN
I hope that was a malfunction.

Robert looks to the right; his stomach sinks.

ROBERT
(indicating with a nod)
Over there.

Kirsten turns her head and surveys the thick safety window at her right; its view is occluded by the numerous hairline fissures running through the glass. Dimly visible through the cracked, dirty, dusty pane is the imposing outline of a nuclear missile; the weapon is covered over with a fibrous net.

ROBERT
(continuing)
Do you think...it's funtional?

KIRSTEN
I don't know, but pick up the pace-- we don't want to be anywhere near that compromised window.

Robert and Kirsten, supporting Bodell, press onward.

INT. DARK ENCLOSURE - MOMENTS LATER

Following Gonnenson, Robert and Kirsten carry Bodell into a space in which the echo of their FOOTSTEPS sounds for several seconds. They pan their flashlights in all directions, but divine nothing from the inky black that surrounds them.

Robert points his flashlight at Gonnenson: the dead, bald man stares at him with blank white eyes...and collapses to the ground.

Kirsten pans her light in front of her...across three staring faces: each DENIZEN is completely bald, emaciated, pale and nominally clothed in tattered rags. They look like half-living corpses.

KIRSTEN
Robert...

Robert turns back around; two more DENIZENS stand up into his flashlight's cone of luminance-- one is bald and gaunt akin to the first three, but the other is younger, possessing hair and lacking arms, instead of which he possesses a short webbed hand and a chitinous stump.

Something stirs behind Robert; he turns. The claw of a hammer is pressed to his throat, the curved iron digging into his adam's apple. A makeshift knife is pressed against Kirsten's throat.

A squat denizen named VICTOR stands before Kirsten; the thirty year-old man has patches of rust-colored hair sprouting like weeds from his malformed head, which itself is distended in the rear and scalloped in the front.

He walks up to Bodell and grabs his hair; he lifts the unconscious man's head and inspect him momentarily. Victor nods to himself. Robert and Kirsten, weapons pressed to their throats, cannot move.

Victor reaches into the crudely-stitched sack hanging at his side. From within it, he extracts a metal tube the thickness of a pencil; it has a hinged flap on one end and a sharp point angled on a bias at the other.

A Denizen grabs Bodell's left arm and extends the appendage, exposing Bodell's soft inner forearm.

Victor spits on Bodell's inner forearm and wipes the expectoration away-- a smear of dirt, sweat and saliva.

Victor taps the 'cleaned' flesh, summoning a branching blue vein and then jams the sharpened end of the metal tube into Bodell's exposed forearm.

Bodell MOANS and lifts his head, momentarily stirred by the pain. Robert and Kirsten look away. Bodell passes out again.

Victor looks at the Denizens holding weapons to Robert and Kirsten's throats. The Denizens retract the hammer claw and makeshife knife.

VICTOR
(to Robert and

Kirsten)
Set him down.

Robert and Kirsten comply, kneeling to the ground with their unconscious burden, gently setting him down.

VICTOR
(continuing)
Now get up. It's time for you two to get your udders.

Kirsten and Robert stand. The ersatz knife is pressed once again to her throat; the hammer claw to his. One Denizen snatches her flashlight; another Denizen grabs her right arm and extends it, exposing her inner forearm. Robert tenses and moves forward; the claw of the hammer at his windpipe digs deeper. He GASPS, relents and then COUGHS.

Victor spits on Kirsten's left forearm and then wipes the spit and the dirt it claimed away, revealing tender flesh...and a vein.

Kirsten shuts her eyes...and then SCREAMS as the metal tube is jammed into her arm. Her knees go weak, but the Denizen holding her arm supports her.

Victor turns his mismatched eyes- one gray, the other almost translucent- towards Robert. The malformed man wrinkles his thickly scalloped brow, tufts of copper hair bunching together upon his parched scalp.

The squat denizen taps Robert's inner arm to summon a vein. A line of blue rises along the exposed skin. He raises the pointed end of the tube over the chosen, spit-cleaned spot.

Robert shuts his eyes. The metal tube slides beneath his skin like a lit dynamite fuse. Robert GRUNTS, suppressing his agony.

With a long yellow fingernail, Victor opens the hinged flap on the exposed end of the tube; CLICK; a drop of blood comes the hollow tip. He nods in appobation and shuts the flap again. CLICK.

INT. WAITING HALL - LATER

Victor and three Denizens watch over Robert, Kirsten and Bodell who sit mutely within the corrugated steel antechamber; the space is illumined by several oil lanterns, the smell of which makes Kirsten and Robert queasy. They cover their noses with their free hands.

VICTOR
Rat oil stinks, doesn't it? We ran out of real candles when I was two.

THE TWINS (O.S.)
Bring him to us.

A Denizen presses Gonnenson's pistol to Robert's burned neck.

VICTOR
Up.

Victor walks to a vault door and spins it, eliciting an audible SQUEAK. The cylindrical pins within the door retract. THUNK. THUNK. THUNK. THUNK. He opens the door and motions for Robert to walk inside.

Robert looks at the opened doorway: weak green luminance shines from within. Fear envelops Robert like a phantom of ice.

THE TWINS (O.S.)
Come to us.

Urged onward by the Denizen with the gun, Robert apprehensively walks towards the viridescent doorway.

INT. THE DEN OF WEBS - SAME

Robert walks into the room; it is hung with innumerable nets, cross-hatching, bisecting and delineating space into an opaque latticework of glassine fiber. The entire space glows with a dim green luminance.

VICTOR
Do what they say or they will kill you.

Victor and the Denizen with the gun withdraw from the room. The door is shut, SLAM, startling Robert. The SQUEAK of the vault wheel is followed by the THUNK THUNK THUNK THUNK of the pins locking.

THE TWINS (O.S.)
Come forward.

Robert's body shakes.

Robert walks forward, his shoes pressing into the downy film covering the floor. The nets immediately before him open up to reveal The Twins.

Suspended upon a sheer net of fibers are two malformed fetuses, whitish-green in coloring. Their blank eyes are bulbous, opaline spheres. They are sexless. The tops of their oversized heads lie open, peeled back like flower petals; a mass of ropy gray tendrils sprout from their opened skulls...and branch into slenderer arteries and veins and eventually into the thousands upon thousands of glassine fibers that fill the room and the silo.

Robert stares- shocked and horrified- at the living fetuses in the nexus of the fiber nets.

THE TWINS
Spill you blood on the floor.

The fetuses do not move at all when they speak.

Robert just stares blankly at the grotesque tableau hanging before him. There is a flash of light; a black handprint smokes upon Robert's white shirt.

Robert raises his shaking left arm. He flips the hinged flap at the terminus of the metal tube. CLICK. Blood drizzles in a slender rivulet to the soft floor, where it SPLATS.

Watching his life pour out before him in a crimson trickle, Robert begins to grow faint.

THE TWINS
(continuing)
Enough.

Robert reseals the tube. CLICK. The spilled blood travels in myriad globules along the threads.

Robert's blood scurries like a fleet of ladybugs up the fibers toward the mouth of the fetus on the left. It drinks the blood, drop by drop.

An idea comes to Robert as he watches the blood enter the tiny gray 'O' of the fetus' mouth.

THE TWINS
(continuing)
You may leave.

Robert quickly scans the room. His eyes light upon a thick collection of protein strands that lead inside a dark aperture in the rear wall.

Robert turns away from The Twins and walks toward the door.

CREAK. THUNK. THUNK. THUNK. THUNK.

Robert glances back at the The Twins: globules of blood continue to flow across the fibers into the mouth of the fetus on the left. The pink, ribbed tube trailing from the anus of that fetus to the other's stomach jerks in spasmodic peristalsis. The second fetus has no mouth.

VICTOR
Come on.

Robert dazed, walks out of the room.

SLAM. SQUEAK. THUNK. THUNK. THUNK. THUNK.

INT. WAITING HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Pale and nauseated, Robert sits beside Kirsten. Bodell is curled up beside her, unconscious.

Bodell GROANS.

ROBERT
(to Victor)
This man needs medical attention...do you think I could look in the backpack lying in the hallway?

VICTOR
No.

ROBERT
He might die. How would The Twins feel about that?

Victor stares at Robert in a hostile way.

VICTOR
You trick me and I'll geld you with my bare hands.

ROBERT
It's not a trick.

Victor nods. He looks at the three Denizens in the hall.

VICTOR
(to the Denizens)
Watch the cows. Don't let them go anywhere unless The Twins ask for them.

The Denizens nod. One trains Gonnenson's gun on Robert.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Victor, returns, carrying Gonnenson's hard-shell backpack. He gives it to Robert. The Denizen holding Gonnenson's laser-sighted pistol trains the red dot on Robert's groin.

Robert unfastens the backpack's latch and opens up the body of the case. He withdraws a medical kit with a bright red plus sign on it and raises it in the air.

ROBERT
See? This is all I wanted.

Robert unfastens the latch on the medical kit and opens the

lid. Gauze, bandages, iodine, painkillers and trainquilizers fill the small compartments.

Robert looks at the Denizen pointing the gun at his crotch.

ROBERT
(continuing)
Can you please...not do that. I'm just trying to help this man.

VICTOR
Point the gun away.

The Denizen complies.

THE TWINS (O.S.)
Send in another cow.

Victor grabs Kirsten's left arm and yanks her up. She GRUNTS at her rough handling.

While his captors are not watching him, Robert slides a tiny clear vial of tranquilizer fluid into Bodell's left pocket.

Victor spins the handle in the center of the door to The Twins' chamber. CREEEK. THUNK. THUNK. THUNK. THUNK.

Robert takes a swab, soaks it with iodine and runs it along Bodell's open neck wounds. The unconscious man's eyelids flicker; the sharp pain rouses him.

Robert places Bodell's hand into his left pocket, to feel the cool surface of the tranquilizer vial.

ROBERT
(whispered)
Mix it with your blood.

Bodell nods weakly...comprehending.

The Denizens refocus their attention upon Robert and his patient.

Robert bandages Bodell's left eye.

Kirsten enters the den of webs; the door is shut behind her. CLANG.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Kirsten, pale and weak from her visit with The Twins, sits beside Robert, leaning her head on his shoulder. Bodell crawls into the open doorway. He looks at Robert and nods, almost imperceptibly. Robert silently mouths the words, 'thank you.'

KIRSTEN
It's strange what you think about...sometimes. I keep thinking that...if I don't make it back, nobody's life will be dramatically changed. My disappearance will be something people talk or wonder about for a little while...but then forget when something else happens.

Kirsten lifts her head from Robert's shoulder and looks and him.

KIRSTEN
(continuing)
Are you worried about not ever seeing your wife again?

ROBERT
I just want to stay alive. My wife's not my biggest concern right now.

Kirsten's eyes flicker up and down Robert's face.

KIRSTEN
Marital problems?

Robert nods.

KIRSTEN
(continuing)
You're funny and bright...and kind of good-looking-- how did you end up in a crappy marriage?

ROBERT
It wasn't always bad. Actually, I thought things were quite swell until I found out that she'd been having an affair for over a year. We go to therapy and try to work through it...but we haven't.

Robert shakes his head.

ROBERT
(continuing)
And we won't.

Kirsten takes Robert's hand.

ROBERT
(continuing)
The odd thing is, she's always

angry with me...like I did something wrong, when she was the one who cheated.

Kirsten squeezes Robert's hand.

KIRSTEN
Well- if we get out of here- you can take me to a motel. Nothing serious...I'd just like to get knocked up.

Robert grins, a brief flicker of mirth that leaves almost the instant it is visible.

ROBERT
I'll take you up on that.

INT. THE DEN OF WEBS - SAME

Bodell crawls forward upon the downy floor, towards The Twins. He is very nervous.

The protein-net in front of him opens wide, admitting a view of the The Twins, suspended in crosshatching fibers.

THE TWINS
Come forward.

Bodell crawls through the orifice in the fiber-net.

THE TWINS
(continuing)
Spill your blood on the floor.

Bodell slots his index fingernail beneath the flap of the metal tube jutting from his left arm. CLICK. Bodell looks at The Twins; they stare blankly from their bulbous, white, frog-like eyes. Clenched in his right hand is the small vial of tranquilizer fluid. He pushes the cap off with his thumb and and drizzles it into the pooling blood.

The tainted blood travels in myriad globules up the fibers, towards the mouth of the fetus on the left.

BODELL
I feel dizzy.

THE TWINS
Enough.

Bodell closes the flap of the metal tube. CLICK. He watches the crimson globules travel into the mouth of the fetus on the left.

THE TWINS
(continuing)

Leave.

Bodell purposely collapses. From the ground he glances back; the fetus on the left imbibes the tainted blood. A moment later, the tube running from its anus to the stomach of its mouthless sibling moves in smooth peristalsis.

Bodell slowly and awkwardly rises to his hands and knees...procrastinating as he watches The Twins. The mouth of the fetus on the left opens: it is yawning.

THE TWINS
(continuing)
Leave.

There is a flash of light; a smoking handprint appears on Bodell's chest.

The fetus on the left begins to shiver. The tube running from its anus abruptly jerks, shaking loose of the protein web. The fetus on the left is seized by a paroxysm and then hangs limply upon the net.

The fetus on the right turns its mouthless face toward Bodell and looks at him with its white, bulbous, eyes.

THE TWINS
(continuing)
The cow has poisoned us.

Bodell rises to his feet and lunges towards The Twins; there is a flash of light. A black ring appears around Bodell's neck. He neck constricts beneath the nearly invisible grasp of whirling protein fibers. He cannot breathe.

Behind him, Bodell hears the SQUEAK of the vault wheel being turned.

Bodell grabs the cluster of tendrils rising from the conscious Twin's flower-like head. He yanks the pulsating mass out of the concave housing within the fetus' skull. Along with the gray protein nexus comes the fetus' delicate spine, pink lungs, and digestive coils, all of which are dripping red and covered with gray nerves.

THUNK. THUNK. THUNK. THUNK.

Bodell, red-faced and suffocating, stares at the horrible thing dangling in his hand like a bunch of grapes. The little pink lungs slowly inflate. Bodell blanches and drops the gory mass to the floor and falls down beside it. His face darkens to a shade of purplish red: he is about asphyxiate.

The vault door swings open.

INT. WAITING HALL - SAME

Victor disappears from view inside the den of webs.

Robert glances at Kirsten and silently mouths the word, 'now.' She nods, almost imperceptibly.

Robert lunges at and SLAMS into the Denizen holding the gun, grabbing the deformed man by his oily wrist.

BANG. The bullet ricochets off of the ceiling with a PING, carooms off of the wall with a WHANG and lances the neck of the bald female Denizen standing over Kirsten. The bald inhabitant grabs her neck, dropping the ersatz knife she holds. The knife falls, point first, into Kirsten's calf muscle. She CRIES out.

Robert SLAMS the head of the Denizen he grapples with into the wall with a CRACK. The malformed man's eyes roll back in his head.

The remaining Denizen, a short fellow with a corroded nose and bulbous black eyes, runs at Robert.

KIRSTEN
Robert!

Robert pulls the gun from the fingers of the unconscious Denizen as the last conscious captor races towards him.

Robert trains the firearm at the right shin of the onrushing Denizen. BANG.

The Denizen's shin CRACKS like breaking bamboo, spraying dark red ichor laced with white fluid. He crumples to the ground.

Kirsten sees something flicker out of the corner of her eye: Victor emerges from the den of webs, running full-speed towards Robert.

Before Kirsten can get a breath in her lungs cry out, Victor SLAMS into Robert. The gun sails into the darkness beyond the rat oil lamp.

INT. THE DEN OF WEBS - SAME

Bodell, suffocating, stares at the cluster of organs attached to the fetus' spine; the lungs inflate with air SLURPED through a pink windpipe no thicker than a straw.

THE SECOND TWIN
Kill the cows or we will blind you all!

Bodell stares in disbelief at the cognizant atrocity on the floor.

Bodell clenches his hands together and raises them over the

gray protein nexus: its brain.

THE SECOND TWIN
(continuing)
Kill th-

SPLAT. The second twin's brain comes apart beneath Bodell's joined hands in pale, clayish lumps.

Bodell is lifted in the air by the Twin's death throe: he is flipped upside down and brought down violently upon his head. His skull buckles and bursts open, eggshells and clay and stewed tomatoes SPLATTING upon the hanging webs.

INT. WAITING HALL - SAME

Robert grapples with Victor near the vault door.

Kirsten, holding the makeshift knife she just extracted from her calf, launches herself at Victor, stabbing him in the stomach and freeing Robert. Victor stumbles back and BANGS his scalloped, lop-sided head against the partly-opened vault door; he drops the gun to the floor where it CLATTERS and slides inside the den of webs.

Victor grabs Kirsten's neck and begins to choke her. Kirsten rakes her fingernails across his scalp, scoring bright red furrows amongst the tufts of copper-colored hair.

Robert rams his shoulder into the vault door, BAM; closing it and wedging Victor between its rectilinear edge and the door frame. The denizen relinquishes Kirsten. Robert puts all of his weight and strength into pinning Victor between the door and the frame: the denizen MOANS as his ribs CRACKLE.

Kirsten spins the wheel in the center of the vault door, where it turns with a plaintive SQUEAK. A steel cylinder seven inches in diameter springs from within the thick door, impacting Victor's sternum with a sharp CRUNCH. Blood sprays from his mouth in a torrid gout. Another pin emerges from the door, CRUNCHING into the center of his face, launching his eyes like gory comets. The two other metal pins jut into open space where they HUM like a tuning forks.

ROBERT
Is Bodell still alive?

KIRSTEN
I don't know.

Kirsten turns the vault door wheel in the opposite direction--lubricated with blood, it does not squeak. The pins impaling Victor retract and his corpse slumps indelicately to the floor, his head THUDDING upon the corrugated steel, his wounds asking unanswerable crimson questions.

Kirsten steps over Victor's body and looks into the den of

webs. Her stomach sinks at what she sees. She shakes her head; her eyes blurred by corruscating tears. Robert does not ask after Bodell.

ROBERT
I saw a hole in the wall behind
The Twins. What's behind there?

KIRSTEN
Should be the launch bay.

BANGING and YELLING sounds in the distance, further up the hall. Robert points to the den of webs.

ROBERT
Go.

Kirsten enters the den of webs. Robert follows.

INT. THE DEN OF WEBS - SAME

Kirsten picks up the gun and then runs toward the rear of the chamber, followed by Robert. They run past Bodell's body, the viscous, organic heap of the eviscerated Twin and its limp, dangling sibling.

Kirsten reaches the three foot aperture in the rear of the chamber and- without hesitation- climbs inside. Robert follows.

INT. CRAWLSPACE - SAME

Kirsten and Robert press on, crawling, panting and bleeding.

KIRSTEN
I see a little light up ahead.
Looks like daylight.

The sound of a mob YELLING and BANGING echoes behind them. They continues to crawl as fast as they can.

INT. LAUNCH BAY - SAME

Kirsten dangles her legs into the enormous cylinder of the launch bay and drops to the ground, eight feet below with a THUD, followed by a GRUNT. Robert THUDS beside her, GROANING and gripping his wounded shoulder.

Robert and Kirsten get to their feet, and are astonished by what they see in the dim blue light of the natural daylight that creeps into the silo from the partially opened hatch.

An upright missile, a towering sixty-five foot shaft topped by an army-green nosecone stands in the launch bay: the missile is heavily corroded with rust and wholly covered with The Twins' web-like netting, veined with black and gray arteries. Nine desiccated human corpses- held firm by the

fibers- are stuck to the body of the missile. The faces of the petrified bodies are contorted and preserved in agony and their manifold limbs and digits are curled like old burnt tree branches.

Robert looks around the silo and sees one door.

ROBERT
Where does that go?

Kirsten shakes her head.

KIRSTEN
Back around to where we came from.

Robert looks at the top of the nosecone and then to the partially opened silo hatch directly above it.

ROBERT
Let's climb it.

KIRSTEN
It's totally unstable. It'll sterilize us-- if not give us cancer straight away.

ROBERT
I don't think we have any other options.

Kirsten stares at the corroded, radioactive nosecone and shakes her head, dismayed by the grim decision facing her. Robert looks at her; she nods. The duo scrambles towards the bottom of the missile.

They reach the base of the upright weapon. Kirsten thrusts her hand into a small rusty hole above her head, just beyond the booster rockets. With Robert's hands supporting her waist, she pulls herself up.

She looks up along the missile base: the strands of the web covering it vary in thickness, from the diameter of yarn to that of thick rope. She thrusts her fingers tentatively towards the lowest protein strand; she winces just before her fingers make contact with the fibers...yet nothing happens.

Grabbing the thickest fibers, Kirsten begins to climb up the missile.

Robert grabs at the same rusted hole and pulls himself up. He then grabs hold of the coarse protein fibers and begins his awkward scramble up the shaft.

The GRUMBLING sounds of irate denizens echo from the darkness of the crawlspace.

Kirsten continues her climb: grabbing a strand, testing it,

changing her footing and simultaneously pulling and pushing up. She ascends. In a matter of moments, she finds herself face to face with a nude, upsidedown corpse. The dead woman's mouth is stretched in a permanent 'O' of agony.

The protein fibers weave into the dead woman's nostrils, out of her mouth and then back into her body through her vagina and then out again through her rectum, holding her fast to the corroded shaft.

Holding onto the net with her pale, sweat-glazed fists, Kirsten looks away from the corpse.

Robert grits his teeth as he ascends: his bullet-grazed shoulder makes the strain of the climb agonizing. He tilts his head back and looks at Kirsten, who has stopped.

ROBERT
(continuing)
What is it?

Kirsten shakes her head.

KIRSTEN
A body. I have to get around it.

Kirsten shimmies along the circumference of the missile and then continues her way up.

Robert gazes back down at the crawlspace orifice. SCREAMS emerge from the darkness like bats sailing out of a netherworld rift.

Kirsten, breathing heavily, continues her ascension, circumnavigating another body. She wipes sweat from her face: her hand comes away with errant eyelashes, eyebrows and hair. She gags, SPUTTERING a small amount of yellow fluid onto the corroded missile shaft. She wipes her mouth and pushes on, undaunted.

Robert, climbing and panting and sweating, turns his head to look down at the crawlspace aperture. Dozens of DENIZENS tumble out of it onto the launch bay floor, some landing well...others landing with dull THUDS. The shins of one emaciated Denizen CRUMBLE like termite-eaten wood.

ROBERT
(gasping)
Kirsten...they're...they're coming.

Kirsten looks down the forty feet of the missile she has traversed: Denizens apply themselves to the corroded, web-covered shaft like flies to a hanging trap. She looks up, the amber light from the partially-opened hatch glaring in her eyes: she still has more than twenty feet to climb before she even reaches the nosecone.

The Denizens flow up the missile, their bald and malformed heads bobbing like a crest of skulls on a wave of mottled limbs and swollen knuckles.

Robert continues up the missile. The Denizens clamber up quickly, travelling at twice his speed. He looks up: Kirsten is ten feet below the nosecone.

THUNK. Robert, pained, GRUNTS: a crude harpoon has pierced his back, just beneath his right shoulder blade.

KIRSTEN
Robert!

Kirsten, holding onto the protein net, aims the gun passed Robert, at the ascending masses.

Robert reaches his right hand upwards, towards the next fiber strand, but his shoulder blade scrapes painfully against- and is inhibited by- the harpoon. He turns his head down: the foremost Denizens- an emaciated woman and a man with misshapen hands- are almost upon him.

INT. THE DEN OF WEBS - SAME

The intact, limp Twin upon the left shudders and then convulses. It vomits ochre ichor upon the ground.

The Twin convulses again and vomits a second time. Blood trickles anew from the empty shell of its adjacent sibling.

The surviving Twin trembles...and slowly lifts its head; its white eyes drip tears and are lined with red veins.

INT. LAUNCH BAY - SAME

The web along the missile constricts; wisps of electricity travel up and down the shaft.

The corpse nearest Kirsten- threaded with webbing through its every orifice- shudders. Kirsten's breath catches; the corpse's eyelids pull back to reveal two empty pits. The animated corpse grabs Kirsten's neck, digging its long-nailed fingers into her neck.

Robert sees the gun fall from above him and tumble like a high-diver to the ground below, where it CRACKS and breaks.

Robert hears Kirsten CRY out. He looks up.

The animated corpse yanks a confluence of arteries out of Kirsten's neck: arterial blood sprays from her torn carotid, painting the corroded missile with a swath of pure crimson.

ROBERT
No, no, no...no...

Kirsten looks at Robert in disbelief while her life escapes in a florid gout from her neck. She clamps her free hand to the wound, but the blood floods inexorably through her clenched digits. Her eyes roll back in her head.

The upside-down corpse shoves her from the missile. Kirsten falls down the shaft, narrowly missing Robert as she drops. Her unconscious body SLAMS into the three foremost Denizens and scatters those immediately beneath them.

Tears streaming down his face, Robert yanks at the harpoon beneath his right shoulder blade: it pops out like a cork of champagne. A trickle of blood scribbles across the back of his white shirt...a crimson monogram.

The sound of an engine WHIRRRING fills the space. Robert looks up.

The light pouring into the silo is eclipsed by a upsidedown black cruciform...the bottom of a helicopter.

Robert looks down: the Denizens, frightened by the noise, descend the missile.

MALE VOICE
Can you make it the rest of the way?

Robert looks up to the opening and sees Calvin leaning in, over the lip.

ROBERT
I can make it.

Robert looks down at Kirsten on the floor of the launch bay: her open eyes stare up at him...frozen in her final agonized bewilderment.

CALVIN
Where are the others?

ROBERT
Dead. All of them are dead but me.

Robert ascends.

EXT. ROCKY REGION - TWILIGHT

Calvin helps Robert out through the hatchway. Some distance away sit three military transports and two jeeps.

ROBERT
What the hell have you guys been doing up here?

Five men in head-to-toe radiation garb- cylindrical bodysuits with reflective visors covering their faces- approach the

opened hatch.

CALVIN
Let's walk.

Robert, enraged, shakes his head.

ROBERT
No. I want some answers right now.

CALVIN
You'll get them, let's just get away from those warheads, alright?

Robert nods and, alongside Calvin, walks toward the military transports and jeeps. Robert brushes sweat from his face; his hand comes away with eyelashes and several dozen hairs.

Robert looks at Calvin: his bite from the rat has been bandaged and his fatigues are clean.

ROBERT
What happened to you?

CALVIN
By the time I broke through the door Captain Gonnenson assigned me to, I'd lost contact with you all: the walkie stopped working. When I saw Chief Warren dead, I got out and called for help.

Major Dillet and Harry exit the foremost of the military jeeps.

ROBERT
And then you and your pals did...what? You hung out and had a fucking barbecue?

Calvin looks pityingly upon Robert.

CALVIN
No. That hatchway opened up and this entire country went on high alert. We had no idea what was going on in there.

We were preparing for a full invasion of the silo when we heard activity down there...if we'd had any idea...

Robert looks at Calvin. A heavy sadness pulls at the features of the Lieutenant's face, making him look far, far older than thirty.

CALVIN
(continuing)
They're really all dead?

Robert nods.

ROBERT
Yeah. And Kirsten almost-

The sentence ends as sparkling punctuation in Robert's eyes. He shakes his head. The sadness overwhelms him.

He looks over at the five men in radiation suits; they stand in tandem at the edge of the opened silo hatch, like imagined robots from another era. The first of the five tosses a smoking tube into the silo. The second of the five tosses a smoking tube into the silo. The third of the five tosses a smoking tube into the silo.

ROBERT
(continuing)
What are they doing?

CALVIN
Let's keep walking.

The fourth of the five tosses a smoking tube into the silo. The fifth of the five tosses a smoking tube into the silo.

Robert and Calvin near the jeep; Major Dillet and Harry await them.

Robert, limping and bleeding and filthy and angry, walks up to the Major and Harry.

MAJOR DILLET
Doctor Linderman.

HARRY
Doctor Linderman.

ROBERT
Sirs.

Major Dillet's small bright eyes flicker upon Robert's burned neck, metal intravenous tube, puncture wounds and shot shoulder.

MAJOR DILLET
You've been badly injured. We should-

ROBERT
What are you doing to the silo inhabitants?

MAJOR DILLET

I know you've been-

ROBERT
Do not patronize nor attempt to placate me, Major. I want to know: what are you doing to those wretches down there?

MAJOR DILLET
We are gassing them.

ROBERT
What type of gas?

MAJOR DILLET
That is classified information.

Robert looks at Dillet's hard eyes and nods.

ROBERT
There is something in there that you should be made aware of...two fetuses that mutated...that grew into something...strange and very, very dangerous.

Major Dillet and Harry exchange befuddled glances. The Major then looks at Robert.

MAJOR DILLET
You want us to...to try and save these...fetuses?

ROBERT
No. We tried to kill them- and I think we did- just make sure that they are really dead. When you find them, pulverize and incinerate them...and afterwards, shoot their ashes into the fucking sun.

Major Dillet and Harry stare at Robert, unsure whether he is completely sane. Harry looks at Calvin and nods.

Calvin puts a hand on Robert's shoulder; Robert winces. Calvin retracts his hand.

CALVIN
Sorry.

Calvin points to the furthermost transport.

CALVIN
(continuing)
There's a bed in the rear of that vehicle. Let's go.

Robert looks back at the silo hatch, which steams like a cup of coffee. Tendrils of smoke climb like cognizant whorls towards the dying red sun.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. DOCTOR FLEISCHMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

DOCTOR FLEISCHMAN, a portly bald man of sixty with thick glasses and a slender mustache sits in a leather chair within his carpeted office. In the olive-colored seat opposite him is Robert. He is gaunt- fifteen pounds lighter than when he left the silo- and has circles around his eyes that look like smeared mascara.

FLEISCHMAN
So what do you wish to discuss today?

ROBERT
My wife left me. I witness violence and death and unimaginable horrors and nearly die myself...and while I am away my wife has an epiphany: we have no future.

FLEISCHMAN
You've not been hopeful about your marriage since her adultery, correct?

ROBERT
Yeah, but I just wish she'd- I don't know- stick around for a few months, while I'm recovering.

I know its selfish, but she knows me better than anyone. These dreams I've been having...they've disrupted my sleep so much.

FLEISCHMAN
Do you wish to discuss your dreams?

ROBERT
I've always felt that dream analysis is a waste of time.

Robert looks at Fleischman, wondering if he has insulted him.

ROBERT
(continuing)
I'm sorry-- I didn't mean to offend you.

FLEISCHMAN
No offense was taken, yet I disagree with your professional opinion on that matter, Doctor Linderman. The human mind is still an enigma. How sensual experience is stored, how the subconscious works, the true function of the amygdala, how hippocampal infusions enhance memories-- there are so many mysteries. We have some idea where memory is stored, but how it is stored there still eludes us. And exactly what can be stored within the various regions of the brain has never been calculated.

Robert nods.

ROBERT
But to look at dreams...fantasies of the subconscious...seems silly.

FLEISCHMAN
To me, it is not silly. Perhaps dreams are a brain's computations, the mind figuring itself out in images as we figure out the world in numbers? Yet if you feel that you have nothing to gain by discussing your dreams, we can move on.

Robert looks at Fleischman, pondering whether or not to discuss his dreams.

ROBERT
I've had this one dream, every night since...the incident within the silo. I hope it doesn't have any true meaning.

Robert shuts his eyes.

CUT TO BLACK

OVER BLACK

ROBERT'S VOICE
I am in a hallway of corrugated steel, like the ones inside the silo. I am naked.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY OF CORRUGATED STEEL

Robert, naked, stands in the hallway, leaning over in an attempt to cover himself. The sounds of a knife being sharpened on a whetstone and his own labored breathing are the only audible noises. Further up the hall, he sees a green light.

Robert tentatively steps forward, pressing the bare soles of his feet upon the steel. He winces. He lifts his left foot and looks at it: imprinted upon the soles of his overturned foot are odd glyphs and symbols. He rubs his sore foot, sets it down and continues to walk forward.

Grimacing with the discomfort that the raised filigree on the floor causes him, Robert walks toward the green light.

He comes upon a metal grating in the floor: the source of the luminance. He kneels beside the aperture and looks through.

Robert's stomach sinks.

CUT TO BLACK

OVER BLACK

FLEISCHMAN'S VOICE
Would you like some water?

ROBERT'S VOICE
No, I'm fine.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY OF CORRUGATED STEEL

Through the crosshatched grating in the floor of the hall, Robert sees a small room: the space is tall and narrow; its corners house cobwebs.

In the center of the room is a table. Upon that table is a fishbowl. Within that fishbowl, mashed in its curvilinear confines like a jar of roasted peppers, are two human fetuses. Their skin is sheer: their skulls and ribs and organs are visible beneath their diaphanous dermis.

The inextricably linked bodies fold into and upon each other like raw dough as they squirm inside their spherical confines. They raise their heads- which have no mouths- and with tiny red eyes, gaze at Robert through the grating.

FETUSES
One day we will crack open your skull and be reborn.

CUT TO BLACK

OVER BLACK

ROBERT'S VOICE
And the last night...the last night...

FLEISCHMAN'S VOICE
Would you like a tissue, Robert?

ROBERT'S VOICE
No. No thank you. The last night Laura and I slept in the same bed...

CUT TO:

INT. ROBERT AND LAURA'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Robert and Laura lie in bed together; the digital clock on the night stand reads 4:43. Laura is asleep; Robert, glazed with a sheen of sweat, is awake.

Robert CLICKS on the bedside lamp. Amber light spills upon him and Laura.

Upon Laura's back, burned through her sleeping camisole, is a red handprint.

CUT TO BLACK

The End.